

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE ON THE ACADEMIC  
WRITINGS OF STUDENTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY  
OF SWEDRU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**




**2020**

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WRITINGS OF STUDENTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY  
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**(190012918)**

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central lamp with a flame, set against a background of a sunburst. The lamp is flanked by two stylized figures. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION' is written in a circle around the top, and 'EDUCATION FOR SERVICE' is written around the bottom. The logo is rendered in a light, semi-transparent style.

**A dissertation in the Department of Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Foreign  
Languages Education and Communication, submitted to the School of Graduate  
Studies in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the award of degree of**

**Master of Education  
(Teaching English as a Second Language)  
In the University of Education**

**OCTOBER, 2020**

## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

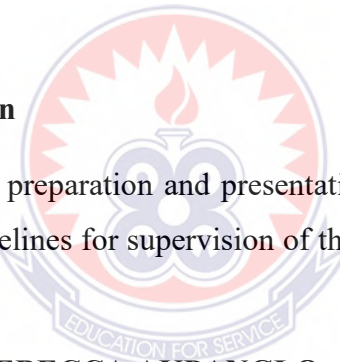
I, Salome Amene Agyemang, declare that this dissertation with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

**SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE:**.....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba



**SUPERVISOR: DR. REBECCA AKPANGLO - NARTEY**

**SIGNATURE:** .....

**DATE:**.....

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved son ASP Edwin Agyeman Asiedu



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Akpanglo - Nartey for the fruitful supervisory role accorded me in accomplishing this work. You are mostly cherished, Madam.

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I am forever grateful.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>page</b>
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
DEFINITION OF TERMS	x
ABSTRACT	xii
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Purpose of the Study	5
1.4 Research Objectives	6
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	6
1.7 Limitation	7
1.8 Delimitation	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>9</b>
2.0. Synopsis	9
2.1. Academic Writing	9
2.2 Social Media Language	12
2. 3 Prevalence of Social Media Language	16

2.4 Influence of Social Media Language on Students' Performance	18
2.4.1 The Positivist View	18
2.4.2 The Negativist View	20
2.4.3 The Neutralist View	24
2.5 Opinions on the use of Social Media Language in Academic Writing	24
2.6 Theoretical Framework	27
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>29</b>
3.0 Introduction	29
3.1 Research Design	29
3.2 Population	29
3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size	30
3.4 Data Collection Instrument	31
3.5 Data Collection Procedure	32
3.6 Data Processing and Analysis	32
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>34</b>
4.0 Introduction	34
4.1 Prevalence of Social Media Language among Students	34
4.1.1 Level of exposure to Social Media	35
4.1.2 Mode of communication on social media	36
4.1.3 Frequency of texting	38
4.1.4 Language use on Social Media	40
4.1.5 Social Media Language use in Writing	41
4.1.6 Teachers Views on the Prevalent Use of Social Media Language among Students	43
4.1.7 Document Analysis	45

4.1.7.1 Students' Scores	45
4.1.7.2 Students' Errors	48
4.1.7.3 Social Media Errors	48
4.1.7.4 Other Errors Committed by Students	49
4.1.7.5 Taxonomies	50
4.2 The influence of Social Media Language on Students' Written English	53
4.2.1 Social Media Language Affect Aspects of Students' Academic Writing	53
4.2.2 Influence of Social Media Language on Students Performance	55
4.2.3 Teachers views on the Effects of SMS on Students' Writings	57
4.2.4 Addiction to Social Media Language	58
4.3 Opinions of both Teachers and Students on the use of Social Media Language in Academic Writings	59
4.3.1 Social Media Language as a Variety of English	60
4.3.2: Acceptance of Social Media Language in Academic Writing	61
4.4 Discussion	63
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>66</b>
5.0 Introductions	66
5.1 Summary of Findings	66
5.2 Recommendations	67
5.3 Conclusion	68
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>84</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
3.1: Target Population, Sample Size and Sample Procedure	31
4.1.1 Exposure to Social Media Platforms	35
4.1.2 Mode of Communication	37
4.1.3 Frequency of texting	38
4.1.4 Language Use on Social Media	40
4.1.5 Social Media Language use in writing	42
4.1.6 Teachers Responses on Prevalence of S.M.S in Students’ Writings	43
4.1.7.1 Students Scores in composition	46
4.1.7.1.2 Marks for Mechanical Accuracy	47
4.1.7.3 Categories of Social Media Language in Students’ Compositions	49
4.1.7.4 Errors Committed by Students	50
4.1.7.5 Identified Errors	51
4.2.1 Social Media Language Affect Aspects of Students Academic Writings	54
4.2.2: Influence of Social Media Language on Students Performance	55
4.2.4 Addiction to Social Media Language	58
4.3.1 Social Media Language as a Variety of English (students’ views)	60
4.3.1.2 Social Media Language as a Variety of English (teachers’ views)	61
3.2: Acceptance of Social Media Language in Academic Writing	62

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
4.1.1 Frequency of sending and receiving text messages	39
4.1.7.1 Scores of Students	47
4. 1.2 Prevalent use of Social Media Language (Teachers“ Views)	44
4.2.1: Teachers views on the Effects of SMS on Students“ Writings	57



## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**SMS** –Short Message Service

**Emoticons** -Short form for emotion icon. It is a pictorial representation of a facial expression using punctuation marks, numbers and letters to express a person's feelings or mood

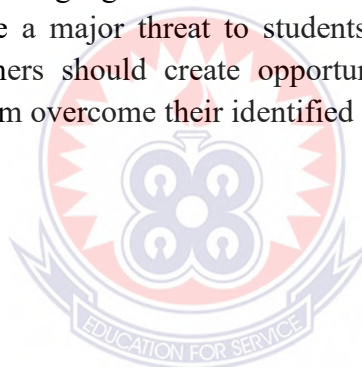
**Text speak** - language regarded as characteristic of text messages, consisting of abbreviations, acronyms, initials and emoticons

**Imojis**– they are ideograms and smileys used in electronic messages and web pages



## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of social media language on academic writings of students of Swedru School of Business. It sought to find out if students' use of social media language had transcended into their academic writings and what opinions are about permitting the social media language in academic writing. The research drew inspiration from the Bandura's Social Learning theory (1997) and Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1974). Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1974) was employed. Data was collected through the use of two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students. Also, students' deviations or errors were collected from their compositions. Data was analyzed qualitatively using the mean and standard deviation values represented in pie charts, bar charts and lines respectively. The findings revealed that though the use of social media language is prevalent among senior high school students on social media, it has not transcended into their academic writings. It therefore had no influence on students' writings. Though the students committed grammatical, spelling and sentence construction errors, those could not be attributed to their use of social media language. The research concluded that the use of social media language does not pose a major threat to students' formal writings. The researcher recommends that teachers should create opportunities for students to write more essays, so as to help them overcome their identified errors.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

Social media, according to Bryer and Zavattaro, (2011) refers to all technology that facilitates social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberations across stakeholders. Social media includes tools such as electronic blogs, audio / video tools (YouTube), internet chat rooms, cellular and computer texting and social networking sites.

This chapter establishes the fact that technological advancement is causing an evolution of the English language. This has resulted in the use of textese on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter and many others. The use of this deviant form of words is steadily creeping into students' academic writings. This chapter gives the background to this study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, state the research questions, gives the significance of the study, states the limitations to the study and also gives the delimitation to the study.

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Academic performance refers to the numerical scores of a student's knowledge representing the degree of a student's adaptation to school work and the educational system. (Kobal & Musek, 2001), It is a norm that at the end of every course at every educational level, students are made to write an examination or perform a task by which they are assessed as on their mastery of the content of the course. This assessment is done numerically and grades are awarded depending on their numerical strength. Whatever grade one attains is regarded as that person's academic performance.

One can demonstrate mastery of the content, which depicts his academic performance, through writing which is considered as the soul of all academic endeavours. It is therefore imperative that senior high school students are highly equipped with knowledge and expertise which will prepare them academically for their final examination that is the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Students are required to master the grammar rules of the English Language, combined with good style to be able to elaborate their ideas. One can do this through constant practice so as to improve one's vocabulary and writing skills.

Academic writing as it stands now, has a lot of influence from social media communication. With students' academic writing, Byrne (1990) identified the content, the language use, the vocabulary use, organization and mechanics as the five components needed to do any meaningful writing. Students' ability to perform well in each of these components help them to secure the marks needed to make good grades in their examinations.

The proliferation of smart phones and computers has given students so much exposure to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and many others where English is the dominant language used. Latip - Yusoph (2016) identified the English Language as the dominant language on social media platforms. This is as a result of its global use which allows all audience to understand the posts made by participants. This notwithstanding, the English Language used on these platforms does not conform to the rules of the Standard English Language. It involves the use of abbreviations, acronyms, emoticons (symbols depicting emotions), omission of words and omission of sounds.

The use of short forms of words started when cell phone companies restricted the number of characters one can use in a post on some of the media platforms (Ahmed, 2014). Belal (2014) found out that students used short forms of words, incorrect grammar and sentence structure in their formal writings unconsciously as they have become much more familiar with those types of language courtesy of social media.

Students of Swedru School of Business are not left out of the trend. It is a common sight to see shortened words and acronyms such as „B/n“ in place of „Between“, „Pls“ in place of „Please“, „b4“ in place of „before“ in the notes of students. It is presumed that as students continually use these forms, they are naturally acquiring a language which they use unconsciously in their academic writings and that is not acceptable. Students' unconscious use of social media language is in line with Howatt (1984) which states that we learn language naturally by living, working and interacting with other people who speak it as their mother tongue.

Students' academic writings can be looked at as any writing done to fulfil a requirement of a college or university (Huber, 2018), and with this, students are expected to use the appropriate vocabulary, write good sentences and be coherent depending on whatever discourse. As this is done to fulfil a requirement, students are assessed based on how well they are able to present their thoughts. They are to observe the formal features of academic writing which include the use of formal language. This does not accept the use of slangs, colloquial words and expressions. Also, there is the need for accuracy such that vocabulary used must have narrow specific meanings to avoid ambiguity. Ability to observe these formal features will help students to secure the needed marks for good grades.

The transfer of this social media language into students' academic writings has provoked a very strong negative response from teachers, parents and language experts. Some parents are worried about their children's future language use as some of the students get so much accustomed to social media language such that they write them unconsciously, even in examinations.

The violation of grammatical rules in social media language contradicts the formal features of academic writing. The use of this social media language in students' academic writings is what prompted this research to investigate how social media language influences the academic performance of students.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This decade has seen a high level of technological advancement which has given students exposure to various social media platforms and has resulted in a new vocabulary, „text speak“ (Carrington 2004 p.215). Text speak refers to the type of English Language used on social media and it is characterized by the use of acronyms, omission of words, vowels, punctuation, capitalization etc. This has resulted in textise such as „LOL“ in place of „Laugh out loud“, „cuz“ in place of „because“, „9t“ in place of night, etc (Carrington *ibid*, Thurlow & Brown 2003). Students' persistent use of this language on social media platforms makes them so much accustomed to it that they tend to use this language in their academic writings and this affects their academic performance. The Chief Examiners' Report of the West African Examinations Council-WAEC, (2018) identified the use of sms language such as „u“ in place of „you“, „4“ in place of „for“, use of the word „cause“ instead of „because“ and poor knowledge of the basic rules of English Grammar, as some of the weaknesses in students' performance in the English Language.



Opinions are divided as to the acceptance of this social media language as another form of English Language. While some teachers complain of students' use of this language in their academic writings which negatively affects their performance, others encourage its use on the grounds that it enables the students to take quick notes and also are freed from rules thereby, making them express their views freely in class.

Christal, (2008), looking at the uses and abuses of English, as well as Yeboah and Ewur (2014) also looking at the impact of WhatsApp Messenger usage on students' performance, came out with similar findings that the persistent use of these platforms wastes students' time, students lose concentration and they also pick violent and criminal behaviour. This research in furtherance of other researches, examines how the language used on social media has permeated the academic writings of students of a particular school that is Swedru School of Business as no such research has been conducted on them. It is also to determine the influence of this language on students' academic writings.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to find out if students' use of social media language has transcended into their academic writings considering the fact that these social media sites have created a universally understood slang which has found its way into our everyday communication. This is meant to contribute to the discourse on social media language on the academic writing of students by providing information about the academic writing of students of Swedru School of Business. The study sought to draw the attention of the target group to how they are being affected by social media language

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Senior high school students are expected to read and write the Standard English Language, taking cognizance of the rules guiding the use of the language in terms of tenses, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc. However, most of these students have resorted to the use of acronyms, imojis, abbreviations and many others which are dominant in social media language but are not accepted in formal writings. The study therefore set out to find the following:

1. How prevalent social media language is among students of Swedru School of Business.
2. The influence of social media language on students' academic writings in the English Language.
3. The opinion of both teachers and students on the use of social media language in academic writings.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How prevalent is the use of social media language among students of Swedru School of Business?
2. How does social media language influence students' written English?
3. What is the opinion of teachers and students about the use of social media language in formal writings?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is of great benefit to students, teachers, educationists and all stakeholders as it explores how often students use social media language in their formal writings and its effects on their performance in English Language.

Also, as it seeks the opinion of both teachers and students on the use of social media language, it will enable people to make informed decisions on the acceptance of social media language as another variety of the English Language as it is believed that language is dynamic.

### **1.7 Limitation**

This study should have involved students from all the three year groups that is forms one to three. This would have made the sample size an accurate reflection of the school's population. However, only form three students were involved in the research because, as of the time of the data collection, the forms one and two students were not in school as a result of the Corona Virus Pandemic. Again, the students, despite the assurance of confidentiality, were unwilling to provide accurate information as they felt it was a ploy to identify and cease their phones. As a result of this, some of the questions on the questionnaire were not answered.

Also, only ten out of the twenty-two language teachers were used in the research as the rest could not be reached because their students were at home and so they were also not in school. Not all, using only one school in the study might not be enough representation of all the secondary schools in the country. As a result of the small sample size, the findings of this research cannot be generalized. However, it will serve a useful purpose for further research to cover all secondary schools in the country.

### **1.8 Delimitation**

This study is limited to the senior high level of which Swedru School of Business is selected as a case study. Although English is studied as a core subject at the senior high level, only form three General Art students were involved in the study. This is because, these classes offer courses related to language.

Also, the study did not consider all the components of academic writing. Good academic writing encompasses the content, organization, good expression, mechanics and sentence construction including spelling and punctuation. „Mechanics“ refers to the accuracy in writing, that is how words are spelt and arranged on paper. It also includes the use of appropriate punctuation, appropriate use of capital letters, abbreviations and units of quantity. This study is restricted to the mechanics and sentence construction.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0. Synopsis

Students' persistent use of social media language on various media platforms and the transfer of this language into students' academic writings have become issues of concern to many. Many researchers have investigated the impact of this social media language on students' performance in the English Language.

This chapter reviews literature on students' academic writings and the nature of social media language. It also looks at how deep social media language has infiltrated students' academic writings and the influence it has on students' performance. The chapter again looks at opinions on the acceptance of the use of social media language in students' academic writings and finally looks at the theoretical frame work for the study.

#### 2.1. Academic Writing

Writing is a special ability that allows the writer to express his thoughts in the form of meaningful words. It allows the writer to have a mental interaction through written messages. The formal expression of thoughts and ideas through writing in fulfilment of a requirement of a college or university is referred to as academic writing, (Huber, 2018).

The main aim of academic writing is to inform rather than to entertain. It should therefore be in the standard written form of the language. Students' mastery of writing skills will make them communicate better in various ways so that others can understand their ideas. To achieve this, Dwi, Triwati and Akhsan (2016) indicate that it is imperative for the students to control the content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling, to make their writings meaningful.

According to Ertl, (2018), academic writing is a specific writing genre that functions within a set of norms, rules and conventions. There is therefore no room for misspelled words, bad grammar and wrong punctuation. Gillett (2011), in line with Ertl, (2018), states that in academic writing, there is formality, complexity, precision, objectivity, accuracy among others. As a result, colloquial words and expressions should not be used in academic essays. Also, it uses vocabulary accurately such that most subjects have words with narrow specific meanings. The language has to be clear and words need to be chosen for their precision.

Dwi et al (2016) on the other hand, indicate that some shortened words such as „Bus“ for „omnibus“, „Pub“ for „Public house“ are accepted in academic writing. Also, some acronyms that is, words made up of the initial letters of a name or phrase and pronounced as words are acceptable in academic writing. An example is „AIDS“ for „Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Other abbreviations read out as individual letters are also accepted in academic writing. Examples are „PhD“ for „Doctor of Philosophy“, „MA“ for „Master of Arts“, „et al“ for „and others“ used for giving names of multiple authors. Etc.

It is imperative that at the end of a course, students writing skills is assessed by observing the students writing using a task. Dwi et al (ibid) explain that this assessment is based on elements such as content, organization, grammar, style and mechanics. Bouanani and Bouchiki (2016, p. 17) looked at the term „mechanics“ as “the appearance of words, how they are spelt and arranged on paper”. It includes the grammar, punctuation and capitalization. These are essential for the students to secure the ten marks allotted to this section of the composition as part of the WASSCE English Language paper.

According to Bailey (2011), capital letters are used to mark the first word of a sentence. They also start the names of organizations, days and months, nationality words, names of people and places, book titles, etc. The Apostrophe is used to show contractions and also with possessives in nouns for example, students' marks. The question mark is used for questioning and the exclamation mark is used to show shouts. The writer is expected to observe the rules guiding the use of these punctuation marks because as stated by Murray and Hughes (2008), punctuations indicate pauses and sentence boundaries and also eliminate ambiguity. Proper punctuation makes the writing more polished and technically correct and helps one to convey a more direct voice. (Starkey 2004 cited in Bouanani and Bouchikhi 2016).

In spite of the formalities in academic writing, Pineteh (2012) indicates that students' writings contain all types of errors including spelling, poor sentence constructions and other mechanical weaknesses that make it stressful and frustrating for lecturers to mark the scripts. This is because, many students struggle to master some of the basic academic writing conventions and this is evident in works submitted by students.

According to Dwi et al (2016), at the end of a course, the students' writing skills is assessed by observing the students' writing using a task. In line with this, at the end of senior high school education, students are expected to write a composition as part of the English Language paper, where they are expected to write understandable paragraphs. For one to be able to do this, according to Nunan (1989), the writer should use the writing skills which include competent sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. Nunan (ibid) 'calls on teachers to assess their students in these.

Hind (2012) in his bid to find out students' challenges in academic writing identified one challenge as students' inability to identify plaque words and phrases and avoiding them. The study also identified students' inability to review the grammar in their writing. They also had difficulty in using pronouns and maintaining pronoun-antecedent agreement. Students were also found to make sentence fragments in their writings. Another challenge was found to be difficulty in combining sentences when writing. All these are presumed to be some of the causes of the numerous errors students make when writing academic papers.

## **2.2 Social Media Language**

Agbedo (2015) looks at internet linguistics as an evolving subfield of Linguistics which studies the new language styles and forms which have become popular as a result of the use of the internet and other web-mediated platforms. The number of social media users has increased tremendously over the past five years. This is especially so among teenagers and students (Aydin, 2012). The popularity of these web-mediated platforms has brought in new stylistic varieties of language and new stylistic interactions which Heidy (2015) refers to as a pseudo-language where words such as „LOL“, „OMG“, „BNT“, „CU“, etc are used.

Muniandy (2002) indicates that social media language is becoming a new form of communication in its own way. The findings revealed that it contains some unique characteristics that make it an innovative discourse variety which contains its own linguistic and structural qualities. This is as a result of the means used to communicate, that is, the use of electronic communication gadgets. Teachers are called upon to be aware of this in the language classroom.

Drouin and Davis (2009) and Jimma (2017) also state that online language usage is full of acronyms, use of symbols, omission of capitals, punctuations and shortening



of sentences. In social media language, the morphology (the forms of words) and syntax (the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-informed sentences) of the English Language are altered, grammatical rules are violated and sentences are ill-formed (Kadiri, Agbo, & Ekwueme, 2018)

According to Kadiri et al (ibid) and Nweze, (2013), there are no stringent rules governing the formation of words in social media language as such, the formation of words, which is supposed to follow organized morphological rules are violated resulting in the use of unrecognized abbreviations and acronyms in the academic writings of students". This is in line with one of the findings of a research conducted by Nwodo (2011) on the language of social media usage among secondary school students in Nsukka. Nwodo (ibid) found out that students" essays were greatly influenced by text message systems of writing which he grouped under unusual abbreviations, grammatical errors, spelling and punctuation errors.

Despite the fact that there are no stringent rules guiding the formation of words, Mushani (2016) in line with Jimma (2017) states that these social media sites have created a universally understood slang and created new words which have found their way into our everyday communication. Bouanani and Bouchiki (2016) identified some commonly used abbreviations and acronyms some of which are: „2morrow" for „tomorrow"; „2nte" for „tonight"; „J/k" for „just kidding"; „IDK" for „I don't care" or „I don't know"; „AEAP" for „as early as possible" etc.

The lack of laid down rules in forming words makes social media language complex and one may wonder how these acronyms and slangs are created. Researchers such as Mushani (2016), Oyeyinka and Akinola (2013) and Ferrara, Brunner and Whittemore (1991) give some categories such as the use of spelling techniques to create words, shortening of words, deletion of vowels, words

represented by letters... etc. This gives acronyms and slangs such as „lv“ for „Love“, „C“ for „See“, „bcos“ for „because“, and „Swit“ for „Sweet“ etc.

On the features of social media language, Kadiri, Agbo and Ekwueme (2018) in a research identified features such as the use of Acronyms, Initials and Abbreviations in forming words. For example, „LOL“ for Laugh out Loud. They identified shortening of words for examples HBD for Happy Birthday. Aside these, Thurairaj et al (2012) identified the use of elliptical sentences i.e. a sentence whose subject or predicate is omitted but is still understood in context. Example: „good“ for „I am good“. Again they identified the substitution of Inflectional and Derivational Morphemes in forming words. According to Haspelmath and Sims (2010) a morpheme is any of the minimal grammatical units of a language, each constituting a word or meaningful part of a word, which cannot be divided into smaller independent grammatical parts. Some of these morphemes according to Agbedo (2015) can be affixes and suffixes added to the root word to differentiate their meanings and uses. Examples are:

- Using (a) as substitute for (er) as in „gender“, ever, clever becoming „genda“, „eva“, and „cleva“ respectively.
- Using (d) as substitute for (th) as in „the“, „they“, „then“, becoming „de“, „day“ and „den“ etc.
- „ee“ is substituted with „I“ as in „keep“, „seen“, „green“, becoming „kip“, „sin“ and „grin“ etc.
- Substituting lexical items with letters of Alphabet. Examples: „see“ becomes „c“, „be“ becomes „b“, „are“ becomes „a“ etc.

- Substituting lexical items with Arabic Numerals and Alphabet. Examples: „one“ written as „1“, „To“ „too“ written as „2“, „before“ written as „b4“, „late“ written as „L8“ etc.

Aside these features, there are other slangs used on social media which are not easy to understand in that, they do not actually give any clue as to what they represent. Some of these slangs are „KOTD“ which stands for „kicks of the day“. Kicks here refers to „sneakers“ that is a pair of canvas „HMU“ stands for „Hit me up“ and this is a way of asking for someone’s Snapchat username or phone number. „Smash“ is the slang for „I will have sex with you“. For instance, if a girl posts a provocative picture of herself, a boy can write the word „Smash“ to express his intention, (Wallace 2015 cited in Salaudeen & Lawal, 2019 p. 72-73).

According to Mushani (2016), almost all punctuation rules are ignored such that „Jack’s car“ is written as „jacks car“. Crystal (2004) however expresses the fact that punctuation, capitalization, spacing and other prosodic features are used for emphasis rather than what they were originally meant for. Examples are: Repeated letters such as aaahhhh, hiiiiii, oooops, soooo; Repeated punctuation marks such as „no more!!!!!!!!“, „hey!!!!!!!!“; See what you started??????“ etc. Writing in all capitals is for shouting such as „I SAID NO“, „WHY NOT“ etc. Asterisk is also used for emphasis as in „the \*real\* man“ „the \*original\* owner“ etc.

Aside these, Lee (2001) and Smith (2003) reveal that users of electronic discourse use other means to show their emotions and facial expressions. A linguistic device such as onomatopoeia is employed to show laughter. For instance, one can write „hahaha“ to show that one is laughing. Also, emoticons are common in social media language. They are typographical codes that one can use to express his feelings and emotions (Crystal 2008). Examples of these are

: ☺ for smile, ☹ for sad; 😮 for surprise and: 😂 for laughter.

### 2.3 Prevalence of Social Media Language

In a research conducted by Asare-Donkoh (2008) on the impact of social media on Ghanaian High School Students, all the 300 student respondents confirmed that they were on one or more social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook messenger, Viber, etc. which usually go with texting. A study conducted by AbuSa' Aleek (2015) revealed that students use a variety of discourse features such as shortenings, clippings, contractions, unconventional spelling and word letter replacement.

Nation (1990) is of the view that frequency of usage and the number of encounters in different forms of context determines the acquisition of new vocabulary. Therefore, through students' exposure to social media language, they tend to acquire this new language thereby writing them unconsciously. Tharinee (2014) observed the use of informal language or inappropriate forms of words in students' academic writings. In the study, some of the students admitted that they did not realize that they were not to use those informal language forms in writing because they had seen them often and used them regularly.

Again, Njemanzi (2012) conducted a „sms“ Survey among 100 first year students of Management Technology Department of Information Management Technology and found social media language randomly used in the students' academic writings. Some examples are, „Hv a 9ye day“ for „Have a nice day“, „I shl be comin 2moro“ for „I shall be coming tomorrow“. When the students were asked how often they used social media language, it became obvious that students per their persistent use of social media language acquire a habit of unconsciously transferring the language into their academic writings.

Other studies on the prevalence of social media language in academic writing were conducted by Omenugha (2009) and Baker (2007). These studies investigated the writings of some undergraduate students and found out that the answer scripts of students contained social media language resulting in spelling mistakes. Some of the scripts had more than twenty spelling mistakes and other informal abbreviations transported from social media. Baker also reveals that secondary school teachers see text abbreviations in school assignments.

To buttress the fact that the use of social media language has become so prevalent among students such that they use them in academic writings, the West African Examinations Council's Chief Examiner's Report (2018) on the English Language indicated that candidates used unacceptable contractions that have become common on social media and this is one of the reasons for candidates' poor performance in the English Language. Adding to this, Mr. Anthony Kofitse, a retired head of the Test Development Division of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in his statement published in the Ghanaian Chronicle of July, 2018, identified the use of social media terminologies as a major contributor to the massive failures in English Language Examinations. Jargons such as „SVP“ for „what is happening“, „BRB“ for „be right back“, „ASAP“ for „as soon as possible“ etc. are adversely affecting the candidates' performance.

From the above, one may be alarmed about the high rate of social media language use in students' academic writings. However, Salaudeen and Lawal (2019) upon a research conducted using 143 mass communication students, found out that only 20% (approximately 29) of the scripts contained social media language. This indicated that 80% of the students were able to differentiate between their choice of words in formal writings and that of informal writings. It should however be noted

that per the findings, one out of every five students in the study used social media language in formal context. Though in percentage the figure seemed minute, there is still the need for stakeholders to pay much attention to this phenomenon. Hogan et.al. (2012) reveals that majority of professors in the study admitted that more than 5% of assignments given were written in text language instead of the Standard English. Mohammed (2011) agrees that there are instances where students use textisms in writing yet, they are not enough to call it a problem.

## **2.4 Influence of Social Media Language on Students' Performance**

By the nature of social media language, sentences are shortened, abbreviations are used, words are misspelled and emoticons are used. These violate the rules that guide the use of the English Language and this has created a divided opinion as to whether this is going to influence students' academic performance positively or negatively. These opinions will herein be looked at as the positivist views, negativist views and the neutralist views.

### **2.4.1 The Positivist View**

Crystal (2008) argues that the panic over texting, in other words, social media language is misplaced in that the texting system of conveying sounds and concepts dates back to the very origin of writing. He stated among other reasons that in a typical text message, less than 10% of the words are abbreviated. Aside this, abbreviations have been in use for decades and so it is not a new thing. One needs to know the spellings of the word before one can text. Texting therefore cannot be a cause of misspelling in students' academic writings.

A study conducted by Belal (2014) revealed that digital social media motivates the students to improve their English Language. As they want to present themselves as perfectionist in the social media network sites, they try to write in proper grammar,

use correct spelling and appropriate sentence structure. It also came out that through the language use on the various platforms, students learn new words, idioms and phrases from their friends and later use them in their formal writings.

Other studies like that of White (2009), have found out that the students made every effort to improve their writing. When such students came across a difficult word in a post, they went back to look for the meaning using a dictionary and then returned to reply the post. Students also used words carefully because they knew that other people were checking on their post.

Aside this, Thurairaj (2012) expresses the view that, communication on social media enhance English proficiency. As the platforms can be accessed worldwide, they allow people all over the world to post and share their thoughts, feelings, news and articles. Since these are mostly done in English, users tend to learn English by default, through the use of social media language.

The role of social media is dominant in the vocabulary development of the English Language, (Irfan et al 2016). This is because, it enables the learners to learn new words and phrases which they then use in their academic writings. Tharinee (2014) is also of the view that through social media interaction, students learn new writing structures when they comment on each other's posts. Through this, they improve their grammar and writing skills. They are able to identify their own writing errors and that of their friends and correct them. They also discuss incorrect grammar with their friends and all these help them to improve their writing thereby, improving their academic performance, (Tharinee *ibid.*).

To buttress the fact that social media enhance students learning of the English Language, Cabrera (2018) indicated that there were a lot of expressions, slangs or

acronyms in social media language which the participants would never have learnt from textbooks. These new expressions helped them to learn the English language more naturally and effectively.

According to Gong and Ooi (2008, p. 917), “social media language has expanded our conceptions about human communication and has offered options which were previously not available and this has made communication convenient and quick”.

Alufohai (2017) expresses the views of some positivists that social media language gives students opportunity to write with speed and accuracy. That is, it enhances their ability to write more with less.

Dansieh (2011) cited in Alufohai (ibid) argues that in texting, one does not just write anything but messages are constructed logically in alphanumeric writing style. Thus, before text messages are sent out, students do some editing so as to format the message into a limited but precise number of words. To be able to do this, one needs to have a good knowledge in the grammar and other dynamics of the English Language. Educators must guide students to take advantage of the good side of social media language to improve rather than hinder students’ proficiency in the English Language.

#### **2.4.2 The Negativist View**

These researchers believe that social media language is a bane of technology as it has negative impact on students’ writing and considers it a threat to literacy.

Thurlow, Lengel and Tomie (2004), stated that, this social media language is harmful in that with it, children may lose their linguistic ability.

Lima, Majo and Nseme (2017) raise concerns that in the area of grammar, there are a lot of distortions in the use of words. For instance, „with“ is texted as „wit“ which



has a meaning different from the intended word. Also, homophones such as „buy“, „by“ and „bye“ are texted in the same manner as „by/bai“. When students use these writings in context, they lead to distortions and ambiguity in meaning. Also, tenses and subjects are not considered in social media language. For instance, „I am annoy with you“ is texted as „am anoi/anoid wit u“. Here, the personal pronoun „I“ is omitted and the past form of the verb „annoy“ is also overlooked. All these in students“ academic writings lead to loss of marks.

Also, according to Dansieh (2011), social media language makes it difficult for teachers and lecturers to make meaning out of students“ writings. Upon a research into sms texting and its potential impact on students“ communication skills, it came to light that the use of textese such as „c“ for „see“, „ē“ for „the“, „u“ for „you“, „pls“ for „please“ and many others lead to difficulty in making meaning out of students“ writings.

Students“ writings are characterized by omissions as a result of social media language. Hezili (2010) identifies omission as one major deficiency in students“ writings. She indicates that chat users omitted copulas, subject pronouns and articles and all these hinder the ability of students to communicate appropriately when writing academic papers. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) adding to this, indicated that most students feel lazy typing or writing sentences and words thereby, resorting to the short-hand type of writing. This destroys students“ spellings and grammatical construction of sentences. Words such as „forward, come, tomorrow and others are written as „4wrđ, kam, and 2mrw“. Also, phrases such as „happy birthday, thank you Jesus“, etc are written as „HBD, TYJ“ etc. All these affect how students write in English classes and in their examinations resulting in the

destruction of their grammar and the way they spell words. “With this, sentences are losing their sanctity and words their character.” (Surya et. al., 2013 p1).

One aspect of students’ writing that cannot be overlooked is punctuation. According to Lima et. al. (2017) and Starkey (2004, cited in Bouanani & Bouchikhi 2017) proper punctuation and capitalization make the students writing more polished and easy to read and understand. However, social media language does not pay heed to these and even if these punctuations are used, they serve a purpose different from what they are meant for in Standard English. For instance, an „x“ is used to indicate the continuous (ing) form of the verb and a stroke (\) is used above a letter to indicate „sion“ or „tion“. Here, what matters is the message but not how the message is presented. Luddy et al (2014) found out that out of 936 English messages texted containing a total of 13,391 words, 25% of the messages contained unconventional spelling. It also came out that dropping capital letters was the most commonly occurring error. This, when passed on into students’ academic writings, affects their performance.

Social media language has addictive tendencies. Belal (2004) in line with William (2008) stated that as students spend long hours on social media, they get accustomed to the language used there. This has an impact on the quality of their writing. They find it difficult to move from the informal social media writing style to the academic style which is restricted and more formal. Oye, Mahamat and Rahim (2012), revealed that many students unconsciously get addicted to the use of social media networks and get obsessed with them. Participants always intend to spend few minutes on those platforms but they end up spending hours. The study showed a rate of 0.736 addiction to social media network sites. Pineteh (2012)

found out that students use Facebook and twitter a lot so when they write essays, they forget that they are supposed to use formal English.

Asare-Donkor (2018) found out that the creation of short codes to represent words negatively affect students' grammar and spelling thereby affecting their performance in examinations. This is confirmed by Almansa, Fonseca and Castilo (2013) who share the same view that students' use of short codes affects their sentence construction and general academic work. WAEC (2018) Chief Examiner's Report identified various weaknesses in the English Language paper. This included poor expression as a result of wrong concord, poor punctuation marks, use of wrong tenses, prepositions and articles. The report also identified wrong use of the first person pronoun „I“, use of sms language such as „u“ for „you“, „4“ for „for“, spelling errors and the use of the word „cause“ for „because“. Looking at the writing skills of some US adults who had some or no college education, Rosen, Chang, Erwin, Carrier and Cheever (2010) reiterated that those who were frequent users of texting language had poorer scores as against their counterparts who were not regular users.

Craig (2003) adds that textism is a threat to students' language proficiency because it makes students create undesirable writing habits as a result of their use of abbreviations and unusual jargons. Students mix these textese with the Standard English Language. As a result of this, Mphahlele and Mashamaite (2005) identify students' display of errors ranging from incorrect spelling to ungrammatical sentence construction. Adding to this, Grace, Kemp, Martin and Parrila (in press) express the view that persistent use of social media language makes it difficult for learners to use various mechanics of the English Language such as grammar, syntax, punctuation and capitalization.

### **2.4.3 The Neutralist View**

This group of researchers believes that social media language has no impact on students' academic writings. Thurlow and Brown (2003) express the view that social media language only made skilled and creative interaction possible and that it did not corrupt language. This came up among other findings in his research.

Baron (2008) made reference to a study published by the British Journal of Developmental Psychology which revealed that students who texted regularly displayed a wider range of vocabulary. Upon this, Baron posits that the most important thing is for the student to distinguish between formal and informal writing. Once the students are able to do this, social media language does not affect their literacy.

Considering that students' writing component is given higher marks in school examinations, Nesamalar, Saratha and Teh (2001) suggest that essay writing should be given more attention so that negative influences of social media language do not affect students' academic writings. Allaith and Joshi (2011) reiterate the fact that spelling mastery shows one's level of education but errors in spelling reveal inaccuracy.

### **2.5 Opinions on the use of Social Media Language in Academic Writing**

„Change, is an inevitable phenomenon in life and a Yoruba proverb says that „the world rolls on and we follow suit“ (Ogunyale, 2016 p.1). This proverb means that everything in this world keeps changing and language is no exception. Atchison (2013) is of the view that “human beings grow, tadpoles change into frogs and milk turns to cheese. It will therefore be surprising for language alone to remain unaltered”. This means the English Language is liable to change with time.

Aside time, technology is said to be one phenomenon which has caused a revolution in the use of the English Language. Upward (1987) reflecting on Tom McArthur's survey on the evolution of the technologies of communication, foresaw computers having a revolutionary effect on writing itself. He predicted computers affecting English spelling resulting in abbreviations. He touched on abbreviations such as Mr, Mrs, etc., i.e., which had been in use since the 17th century and are still in use and questioned whether more abbreviations are going to be usefully introduced into the English Language. With these in mind, then it will not be out of place to accept the unconventional spellings of „u“, „ur“, „dey“ etc for „you“, „your“ and „they“ respectively as they are associated with computer mediated interaction (Ogunyale, 2016).

AbuSa' Aleek (2015) analysing electronic discourse reveals that it has resulted in changes in the way students write, thus, it has led to significant variations in the way students write leading to a change in the written structure of the English Language. Muniandy (2002) thereby call on teachers to be aware of this new discourse in the language classroom.

In as much as social media language is characterized by the use of abbreviations, acronyms and emoticons and violates punctuation and capitalization rules, Drouin and Davies (2009) are of the view that this abbreviated written language resembles that of the early phonological stages of spelling, where spellers omitted medial vowels and encoded only salient sounds such as the initial and final consonants and also used letter names to represent whole words. This resulted in textese such as „gd“ for „good“ and „r“ for „are“. This supports the fact that textism is not a new development in the English Language.

Mantiri (2010) identifies technological advancement as one of the factors that lead to language change. He states that technological advancement leads to changes in pronunciation, creation and borrowing of new words, meanings of old words drift and morphology decays or develops. It is therefore not surprising that with technological advancement, the present generation is coming up with new words and sentences and meanings of words keep changing.

Legitimizing social media language, Sim and Pop (2014), Drouning and Davis (2009), Duffy (2003) and Yoskowitz (2011) all agree that social media language has created new words and terms which have found their way into various dictionaries. For instance, the Oxford Dictionary has words such as selfie, emoji, phablet as well as terms such as „LOL“, „BFF“, „IMHO“ etc for „Laugh Out Loud“, „Best friends forever“ and „In my humble opinion“ respectively. In their opinion, adding these social media terms in the dictionary is a way of legitimizing the use of the terms.

Craig (2003) argues that textisms are not actually wrong as language naturally evolves and these new creations may eventually become part of the Standard English lexicon. According to Surya et al (2013) some schools; in their bid to depict the evolution of English as a language, have incorporated text messaging into their mainstream education. They cite a study conducted by Vosloo (2009) which showed that a teacher in the United States use text messages from the past decade and compare them to modern day messages to show the changes in social communication. Based on these premises, the current research sought the opinion of teachers and students about the acceptance of social media language in students“ academic writings.

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

The research is based on two theories which are: Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1974) and Albert Bandura's (1997) Social Learning Theory. The idea behind the social learning theory is that people learn from each other through interactions in social context. This usually happens through observation. As a person observes the behaviour of others, that person tends to assimilate and imitate that behaviour. The three major principles underlying this theory are observation, imitation and modelling. While the behaviourists believe that there should be a permanent change in behaviour to show that learning has taken place, the social learning theorists also believe that it is not always necessary for one's learning to show in his performance as people can learn through observation alone and as such may not result in behaviour change.

According to Bandura (ibid), because of man's superior cognitive capacity, man is not only affected by his experiences but considers the consequences accompanying the actions he takes. This theory is considered appropriate for the research in that the present dispensation has created the needed environment for the use of social media language which needs to be investigated as to how deep students use of this language. As a result of their interaction with others, has infiltrated their academic writings.

The research also employed Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1974) which looks at Error Analysis as a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on errors learners make. It compares errors learners make in their use of the target language and the target language itself. It looks at students' deviations in their language use as against the Standard English. In the bid to answer the various research questions, the

researcher followed the stages of error analysis as stated by Ellis (1994, P. 48). The stages are:

- Collection of a sample of learner's language
- Identification of errors
- Description of errors
- Explanation of errors
- Evaluating or correcting the errors

Upon going through these stages, the research analyzed the errors to see if they were as a result of the impact of social media language.

In sum, the use of social media language in academic context has not been sufficiently explored, looking at the various views expressed as to the prevalence of social media language use among students. This chapter, looking at how prevalent the use of social media language is among senior high students and examining views as to its positive and negative effects on students' writings, there is the need to consider how best it can be used to enhance students' writings instead of outright rejection.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at the research design. It also looks at the participants of the research by giving the population and the sampling techniques used. It again gives information on the tools used in gathering data. These tools were marked scripts of students and two questionnaires designed for both teachers and students. The data collected is presented separately in the chapter. The scope of this chapter gives information on the methods used for the study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey design as according to McCombes (2020), this design aims to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, correlations and categories. As the study meant to find out the trend of social media use among its participants, this design was considered appropriate.

#### 3.2 Population

The study targeted all the students and language teachers of Swedru School of Business to whom the result of the study was to be generalized. However, the accessible population in the study was the form three students only. This is because, as of the time of collecting the data, the forms one and two students had gone home as a result of the corona virus pandemic. For this same reason, ten out of the twenty-two language teachers were involved in the study.

Aside this challenge, the student participants were deemed appropriate since they are at the peak of polishing their language and are perceived to know how to use

the various social media platforms better than the rest of the students in lower classes.

Also, the participants were selected because of their ability and their background in using media and were expected to contribute meaningfully to the research.

### **3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

Though the research targeted the form three classes with a total population of about 984, covering 16 classes, it became needful for sampling to be employed. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) guide on sampling was used. This indicates that with a population of less than 100, 100% of the population should be used in the study. For a population between 100 to 1000, 30% is to be taken to represent the target population. This notwithstanding, three classes out of the sixteen form three classes were selected for the study. The classes are 3A3 (A), 3A3 (B) and 3A4. The classes were chosen on the grounds that they offer Literature in English, French and Fante and as such, they were considered the language biased classes.

The total enrolment of these classes is as follows, 3A3 (A) had 70, 3A3 (B) had 70 and 3A4 had 65 students respectively. This gave a total population of 205 students. Employing systematic sampling technique, the third person in succession was chosen to take part in the study. This gave the sample population as follows: 3A3 (A) = 21, 3A3 (B) = 21 and 3A4 = 20, giving a total of 62 participants forming a percentage of 30%.

However, for various reasons, some of the participants opted out making the figures stand as follows, 3A3 (A), 17, 3A3 (B), 17 and 3A4, 16 giving a total of 50 students forming a percentage of 24%. All the ten teachers teaching English in form three participated in the study. Here, the total sampling technique was

employed as the number of teachers available was relatively small and they also shared common characteristics. In all the study has 60 participants.

**Table 3.1: Target Population, Sample Size and Sample Procedure**

<b>Respondents/ Class</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Sample Procedure</b>
Students 3A3(A)	70	17	Systematic sampling
Students 3A3(B)	70	17	Systematic sampling
Students 3A4	65	16	Systematic sampling
Teachers	22	10	Total sampling
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>60</b>	

**Source: Field data, March 2020.**

### 3.4 Data Collection Instrument

Students had written a composition on the topic: „As the Senior Prefect of your school, write a speech you will deliver to first year students on how to manage their time“. Their scripts were already marked by their teachers. The researcher then collected data from the students marked scripts.

Also, two questionnaires were used in the study. Questionnaires can be defined here as a collection of items to which respondents are expected to react in writing. It is a suitable tool because it ensures confidentiality, according to (Kombo and Tromp 2006). Also, the information given could easily be described in writing. The questionnaires were designed for students and teachers. The students' questionnaire contained 36 items including information on their bio data. The questionnaire for teachers had 12 items altogether. The questionnaires were in the form of a Likert scale but the teachers' questionnaire had one question where they had to choose

one answer from five options lettered a to d. The questions aimed at seeking how far students' formal writings have been infiltrated and also seek opinions as to the acceptance of social media language in academic writings.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

This study adopted a descriptive survey method which was appropriate because it is used to investigate and describe phenomena in their natural setting thereby, investigating students' language use in the natural environment.

Marked scripts of students were taken from their teachers and were sorted according to the scores. The researcher considered the highest, average and the least scores. Incidence of social media language features were looked out for and these included omissions, punctuations, abbreviations, emoticons and smileys. The scripts were assessed under content, organization, expression and mechanical accuracy. However, to meet the limitations of the research, attention was focused on the mechanics. Samples of students' errors were collected, described and explained. The scripts were analyzed and findings written down as arguments to justify some cases of mistakes done by students in their academic writings.

Also 50 questionnaires were administered to fifty students, 18 males and 32 females of different ages. Ten questionnaires were also administered to ten teachers. Responses from participants were analyzed to find out students and teachers attitudes and opinions towards the use of social media language in students' academic writings.

### **3.6 Data Processing and Analysis**

As already stated, students marked scripts were used as a tool in the study. The test was marked out of 50 and per the 50 selected scripts, which were purposively

sampled from the highest to the least score; students' scores are presented in the next chapter.

The data collected was analyzed qualitatively using the mean, standard deviation and the simple percentage and presented in pie charts, bar charts and lines respectively.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis as well as results obtained from the research instruments on the influence of social media language on the academic writings of students of Senior High School: A case study of Swedru School of Business. The research instruments were two questionnaires designed for teachers and students. Also, data was collected from students' written compositions. To make the raw data meaningful and to obtain the significant results from which generalizations could be made, the results were presented in charts, graphs and tables using frequency distributions, percentages, mean and standard deviations. The mean values were 3.25 - 4.00 strongly agree, 2.50 - 3.24 agree, 1.75-2.49 divided opinion and 1.00 – 1.74 strongly disagree. The following research questions guided the study. How prevalent is the use of social media language among students of Swedru School of Business? What is the influence of social media language on students' written English? What is the opinion of teachers and students on the use of social media language in formal writings? The chapter, aside analysing data based on the stated research questions, discusses the findings of the research.

#### 4.1 Prevalence of Social Media Language among Students

This section discusses data collected on the use of social media language among students of Swedru school of Business. The respondents were presented with questionnaire which had statements with five options to select from. The options were: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and strongly Agree (SA).

#### 4.1.1 Level of exposure to Social Media

To find out the prevalent use of social media language in students' writings, it was necessary to find out the participants' level of exposure to the various social media platforms. The Student participants were presented with four statements and the responses were as follows.

**Table 4.1.1 Exposure to Social Media Platforms**

Statements	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard deviation
I have accounts with more than one social media platform	0	6	0	16	27	4.30	0.99
I have been on the platforms for more than six months	3	5	1	18	22	3.97	1.41
I often chat with friends on social media	0	2	0	18	29	4.51	0.76
I seek information on social media for my assignments	2	2	0	15	30	4.40	1.04

It showed up in the responses that 27 out of 49 of the sample strongly agreed that they have had accounts with more than one social media platform. 16 students agreed to the statement that they have had accounts with more than one social media platform as against 6 who disagreed with the statement. With a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.99, it can be deduced that almost all the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that they had accounts with more than one social media platform. Also 22 respondents and 18 respondents strongly agreed and agreed that they have been on those social media platforms for more than six months. 3 and 5 respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. 1

respondent however remained undecided. Considering a mean of 3.97, it can be implied that a greater number of the respondents have spent more than six months on the various social media platforms. It can again be implied that out of the 49 student respondents, only two can be said to have spent less than six months on the various social media platforms. This was depicted by the standard deviation of 1.41. Again, it showed up in the responses that almost all the respondents chat with friends on social media. This was revealed through a mean of 4.51. Out of the 49 student respondents, 29 and 18 strongly agreed and agreed that they chat with friends on social media. Only 2 respondents disagreed with the statement. Not all, the responses revealed per the mean of 4.40 that majority of the respondents sought information from the various social media platforms for their assignments. With a standard deviation of 1.04, only 1 out of the 49 respondents did not seek information from social media for assignments.

From the responses, it can be realized that the respondents were highly exposed to the various social media platforms and their language use thereof. According to Heidy (2015), the popularity of these web-mediated platforms has brought in a new stylistic variety of language referred to as a pseudo language. Having accounts on the various platforms was an indication that all the participants were familiar with the use of social media language.

#### **4.1.2 Mode of communication on social media**

With the high level of the respondent's exposure to the various social media platforms, the research sought to find out the preferred mode of communication on social media. Three statements were responded to as presented in the table 4.1.2.



**Table 4.1.2 Mode of Communication**

Statements	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA (5)	Mean	standard deviation
I prefer to communicate on social media by texting	0	0	0	21	28	4.57	0.26
I prefer to communicate on social media by speaking	25	11	0	8	5	2.12	2.08
I prefer to communicate on social media by speaking and texting.	15	10	2	7	15	2.93	2.84

With a mean of 4.57, the responses revealed that the preferred mode of communication on social media was texting. 28 out of the 49 participants strongly agreed and 21 of the participants agreed to the statement that they preferred to text on social media. Almost all the participants preferred to text as the standard deviation stood at 0.26. Comparing this to the other modes of communication on social media such as speaking only and speaking and texting, texting still came up as the most preferred mode of communication on social media. Speaking and texting came up as the second most preferred mode of communication with a mean score of 2.93 and a standard deviation of 2.84. This presented an almost equal proportion of preference. Speaking only was presented as the least preferred mode of communication on social media with a mean score of 2.12. The implication here is that majority of the participants prefer texting to other modes of communication on social media. This conforms to the findings of Hogan et al (2012) which

indicated that majority of modern teenagers texted their friends at least once a day. Just a small number called their friends or engaged in face to face conversations.

#### 4.1.3 Frequency of texting

Having identified texting as the most preferred mode of communication, it became imperative to find out how often this was done and the language used in texting. The respondents gave responses to the following statements as presented in table 4.1.3.

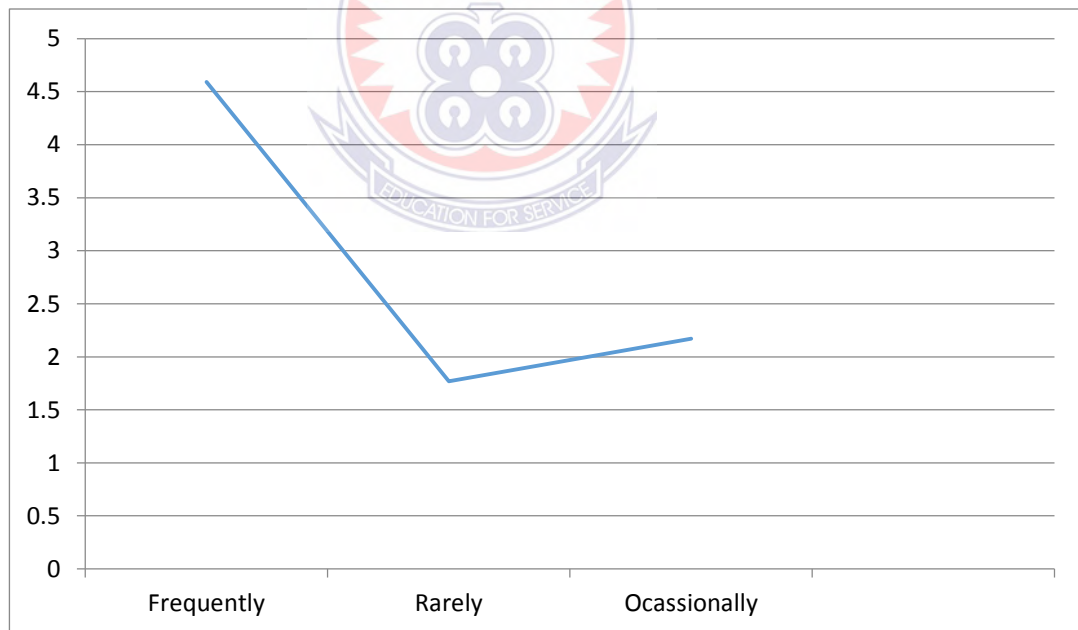
**Table 4.1.3 Frequency of texting**

Statements	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I send and receive text messages frequently on social media	0	2	0	14	33	4.59	0.51
I rarely send or receive text messages on social media	25	15	4	5	0	1.77	1.30
I occasionally send or receive text messages on social media	15	15	0	9	10	2.17	2.45

On the frequency of sending and receiving text messages, the mean score of 4.59 indicated that majority of the respondents send and receive text messages frequently. 33 out of the 49 participants strongly agreed that they sent text messages frequently on social media. 14 participants also agreed to the statement. Only 2 participants disagreed with the statement. Again, it was revealed that less than 2 of the participants rarely sent or received text messages as indicated by a mean score of 1.77 with a standard deviation of 1.30. This notwithstanding, with a

mean of 2.67, it can be deduced that there was a divided opinion on receiving and sending text messages occasionally. Considering the mean score of 4.59, 1.77 and 2.67, there was the indication that almost all the participants frequently send and receive text messages. The implication is that according to Nation (1990), the frequency of usage and the number of encounters in different forms of context determines the acquisition of new vocabulary. In line with this is Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1997) which proposes that people learn from each other through interactions in social context. In view of this then, by the frequent texting, it became obvious that the participants might have acquired the pseudo language commonly used on social media through their interactions with others. The responses are hereby illustrated as follows:

**Figure 4.1.1 Frequency of sending and receiving text messages**



#### 4.1.4 Language use on Social Media

With language used on social media, Latip-Yusoph (2016), identified the English language as the dominant language on social media due to its global use which allows all audience to understand each other's post. Upon this premise, the participants were presented with four statements and the responses presented as follows.

**Table 4.1.4 Language Use on Social Media**

Statements	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I prefer to communicate on social media in English	0	2	0	0	47	4.87	0.43
I use abbreviations, short forms of words, emoticons and other forms of SMS when texting	0	10	0	0	39	4.38	1.58
I use the standard English when texting	35	14	0	0	0	1.28	0.21
Using textism, makes me type with speed.	5	5	5	10	24	3.87	2.32

From the table it was realized that almost all the participants preferred to communication on social media in English. This was indicated by a mean score of 4.87 and a standard deviation of 0.43. However, in as much as the respondents used the English language on social media 39 of the sample agreed with the use of abbreviations, short forms of words, emoticons and other forms of social media language features when texting. 10 participants however disagreed with the statement. This gave a mean score of 4.38 and a standard deviation of 1.53 which

was an indication that majority of the participants use abbreviations and other short forms of words when texting on social media. This affirms the concerns of Drouin and Davis (2009) and Jimma (2017), who indicated that online language usage was full of acronyms, use of symbols, omission of capitals, omission of punctuation and shortening of sentences.

Again, from the responses it was revealed that though the participants used the English language on social media, only a few used the Standard English as indicated by a mean of 1.28 and a standard deviation of 0.21.

The study thereby confirmed the English language as the dominant language used by participants on social media. 47 of the respondents affirmed their use of English when communicating with friends on social media. However, the participants revealed that the English language they used on social media were littered with informal features such as abbreviations, short forms of words, acronyms, emoticons and other features which were unconventional in formal writing. 39 participants, used social media language when texting. 10 of the participants refuted the use of social media language when texting giving a mean of 4.38. Per the responses, it was realized that English was the dominant language though majority refuted the use of the Standard English with the mean score of 1.28. One major reason which came up strongly with the mean score of 3.87 was that the use of unconventional language made students type with speed.

#### **4.1.5 Social Media Language use in Writing**

With the prevalent use of social media language in texting as indicated earlier, the researcher sought to find out if these social media features transcended into students' academic writings and responses are hereby presented as follows:

**Table 4.1.5 Social Media Language use in writing**

Statements	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	MEAN	Standard Deviation
I use social media language in writing	8	0	0	0	41	4.34	2.25
I use social media language in class assignments	32	8	2	2	3	1.57	3.85
I use social media language in examinations	38	8	2	1	0	1.30	2.12
I use social media language in copying notes	0	2	0	6	41	4.75	0.64

Out of a total of 49 participants, 41 admitted using social media language in writing while 8 did not use social media language in writing. This notwithstanding, Salaudeen and Lawal (2019) argued that majority of students were able to distinguish between formal and informal writing. They therefore avoided social media chat language in writing examinations. Despite the high number of participants who admitted using social media language in writing, the mean score of 1.57 and a standard deviation of 3.85 indicated that participants avoided the use of social media language in class assignments. This trend repeated itself as majority of the participants avoided the use of this language in examinations. This was revealed by the mean score of 1.30 and a standard deviation of 2.12. The trend is however predominant in the students notes as revealed by the mean of 4.75 and a standard deviation of 0.64. Some of the participants indicated that they used the language in their notes but not in class assignments and examinations. This is in the view that they were aware that they would be penalized as those features do not conform to the Standard English. This conforms to an aspect of Bandura's Social

Learning Theory (1997) which indicated that because of man's superior cognitive capacity, man is not only affected by his experiences but considers the consequences accompanying the actions he takes. This implies that the participants were aware of the fact that using social media language in academic writing will make them lose marks which will affect their performance in the English language. They therefore avoided its use in academic writings.

#### **4.1.6 Teachers Views on the Prevalent Use of Social Media Language among Students**

This section sought the views of teachers on students' use of social media language in academic writings. The 10 teachers used in the study have teaching experiences of between 1 to 12 years and above. They could therefore identify the development of new trends in students' writings. The teachers were presented with four statements and the responses are hereby presented in table 4.1.6.

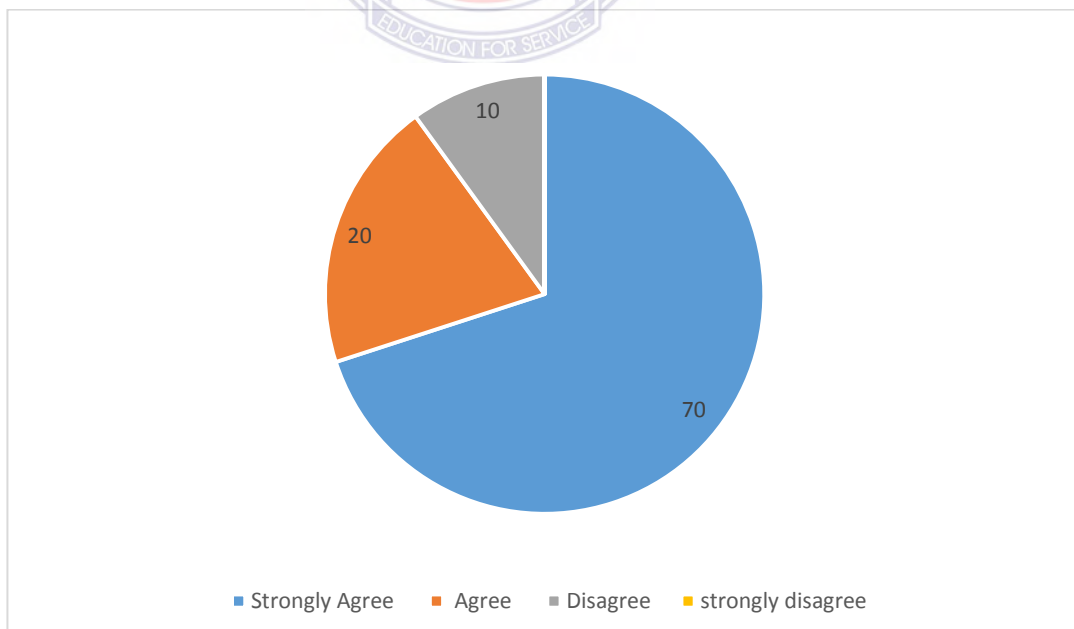
**Table 4.1.6 Teachers Responses on Prevalence of S.M.S in Students' Writings**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>SD (1)</b>	<b>D(2)</b>	<b>U(3)</b>	<b>A(4)</b>	<b>SA(5)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
I have noticed an increase in the use of text language in students' assignments.	0	1	0	2	7	4.5	0.85
I often see social media language features in students' writings.	0	1	1	3	5	4.5	0.95
Students are able to distinguish between formal and informal writings.	2	2	0	6	0	2.4	2.2

From the Table, it was realized that 7 out of the 10 teacher respondents strongly agreed and 2 respondents also agreed that they have noticed an increase in the use of text language in students' assignments. 1 however declined the statement that there was an increase in the use of social media language in students' assignments.

The mean score of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.85 indicated that majority in fact, almost all the teacher respondents attested to the fact that they have noticed an increase in the use of text language in students' assignments. This is in line with previous researches by Tharinee (2014) and Njemanzi (2012). As Tharinee observed, the use of informal language or inappropriate forms of words in students' academic writings, Njemanze found these text features randomly used in students' academic writings. It can therefore be deduced that the use of these features in students' writings have persisted and per the responses from the teachers, it is on the rise now. The responses of the teacher respondents are illustrated in Figure 4.1.2

**Figure: 4. 1.2 Prevalent use of Social Media Language (Teachers' Views)**





Adding to the above, 5 of the sample and 3 of the sample strongly agreed and agreed that they often saw text features in students' writings. 1 respondent however disagreed with the statement and another 1 remained undecided. The mean of 4.2 with an insignificant deviation of 0.96 signifies that almost all the teachers strongly agreed to the fact that students used social media language features in writing. With a mean of 2.5 and a standard deviation of 3.05, the use of text language in examinations drew an almost a divided opinion. As 4 agreed that the students' used text features in examinations, 5 declined the statement. 1 however remained undecided. This shows the opposing views carried by teachers on students' use of social media language in academic writings.

This in line with the responses of the students' views, 6 of the teacher sample agreed with the statement. 2 each strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. The implication is that majority of the teacher respondents are of the view that students are able to distinguish between formal and informal writings therefore, though students used text features in writing, they did not transport them into their class assignments and in examinations.

#### **4.1.7 Document Analysis**

After seeking the opinions of both students and teachers on the prevalence of social media language in students' academic writings, the researcher conducted a study of the marked scripts of the students to look out for traces of social media language in their compositions. This section presents and analysis data on the outcome of the study.

##### **4.1.7.1 Students' Scores**

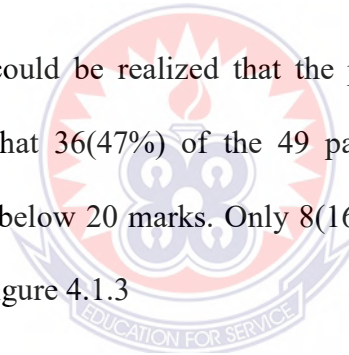
Students' written compositions were analyzed. The topic was "As the senior prefect of your school, write a speech you will deliver to first year students on how to

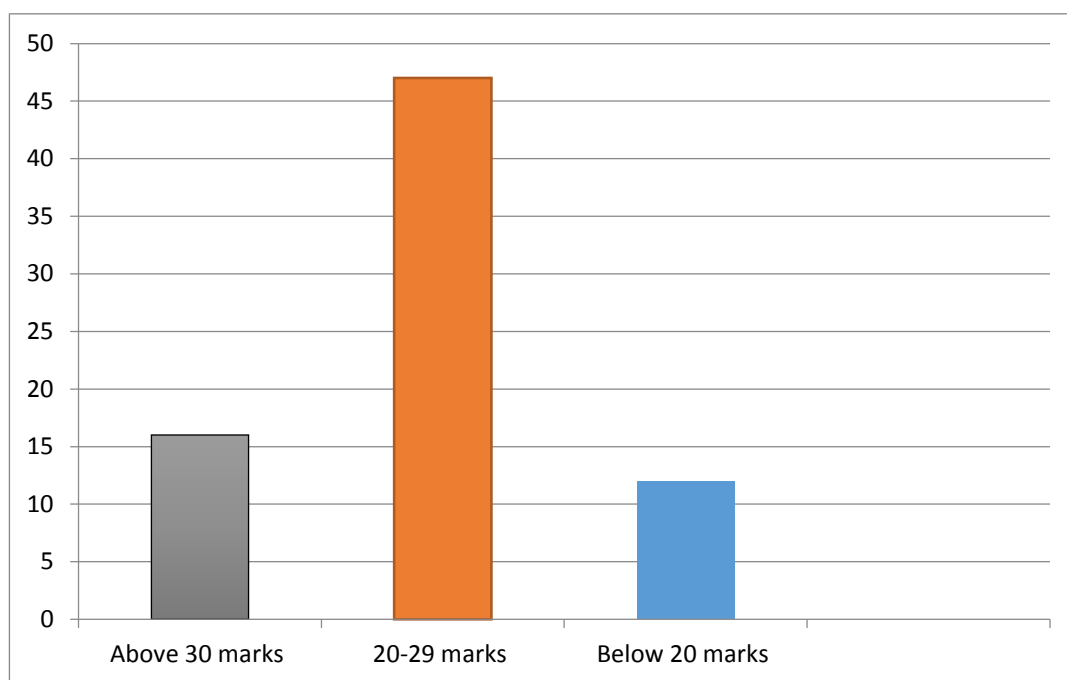
manage their time<sup>\*\*\*</sup>. The essays were already marked by their teachers. The essays were scored under content 10 marks, organization, 10 marks, expression 20marks and Mechanical Accuracy 10 giving a total of 50 marks. The scores of the students were tabulated as follows

**Table4.1.7.1 Students Scores in composition**

Table Score	Total scores of participants				
	3A3(A)	3A3(B)	3A4	Total	Percentage
Above 30 marks	2	6	0	8	16%
20-29 marks	13	7	16	36	47%
Below 20 marks	2	4	0	6	12%

From table 4.1.7, it could be realized that the performance of the students was average considering that 36(47%) of the 49 participants scored between 20-29 marks and six scored below 20 marks. Only 8(16%) participants scored above 30. This is illustrated in Figure 4.1.3



**Figure 4.1.7.1 Scores of Students**

Aside the total score, the researcher studied the scores of participants as to the various aspects, of the composition. It was realized that candidates, scored good marks in the various aspects but for mechanical accuracy. As the focus of the study had to do with grammar and spelling, marks for mechanical accuracy were taken and hereby presented as follows.

**Table 4.1.7.1.2 Marks for Mechanical Accuracy**

Score	3A3(A)	3A3(B)	3A4	Total	Percentage
0	13	4	10	27	55.1%
1	1	5	5	11	22.5%
2	2	2	3	7	14.2%
3	1	2	0	3	6.1%
4	0	1	0	1	2.0%

From Table 4.1.8 it could be realized that a greater number of participants, 27 out of 49, which is more than half of the sample (55.1%) scored the least grade of 0. Only 1 participant (2.0%) scored 4 out of the 10 marks allocated. This implies that

students exhibited difficulty in observing grammatical rules thereby, performing poorly.

#### **4.1.7.2 Students' Errors**

According to the marking scheme used for the scoring of the composition which corresponded to that of WAEC, marks allocation for mechanical accuracy was 10 and the errors for which 1/2 a mark was deducted as penalty up to the maximum of the 10 marks were, undeniable errors in grammar, punctuation errors, spelling errors and wrong construction of sentences.

Corder's Error Analysis Theory (1974) was employed in identifying errors in students' writings. This theory looks at the students' deviation in their language use as against the Standard English Language. Upon this, data was collected on the traces of social media language in the compositions of the participants. Each of the participants was to write a composition of at least 450 words but majority of them could not meet these criteria. They wrote between 250-350 words. This gave an approximate number of words as 10,000. Out of this, the researcher collected data.

#### **4.1.7.3 Social Media Errors**

The following identified social media language features were categorized based on the categorizations of Kadiri et al, (2018), Thurairaj, et al (2012) and Luddy et al (2014) and presented in table 4.1.7.3

**Table 4.1.7.3 Categories of Social Media Language in Students' Compositions**

<b>Social media language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Shortening	5	0.025%
Clippings	4	0.02%
Word-letter replacement	0	0%
Word-digit replacement	0	0%
Word combination	0	0%
Contractions	0	0%
Initialization	0	0%
Emoticons	0	0%

From table 4.1.7.3, it could be realized that there was not much of social media language features occurring in the students' writings. Out of the categories, only 2 occurred. Shortening which refers to the dropping of the final letters of words had a frequency of 5 giving a percentage of 0.25%. Some of the characters were "pls" for "please" and "thnks" for "thanks". The next to occur was clippings with a frequency of 4(0.02%). Clippings refer to the drop of initials or final letters of words yet the meaning of the word still hold. Examples of such features were "morrow" for "tomorrow" and "cos" for "because". The other features such as word-letter replacement, word-digit replacement, word combination, contractions, Initialization and emoticons however did not show up in the compositions hence the frequency of 0 (0%). Per the percentage of occurrence, it could be deduced that the use of social media language features in students' writings is minimal. This is an indication that it has a rare occurrence in students' writings.

#### **4.1.7.4 Other Errors Committed by Students**

Despite the rare occurrence of social media language features, the compositions had other blemishes. The researcher, following Ellis (1997) stages of analysis

identified other errors, described the errors, explained the errors and corrected them. The errors were grouped under grammatical, spelling, punctuation and capitalization of which the frequency of occurrence is presented in table 4.1.7.4

**Table 4.1.7.4 Errors Committed by Students**

<b>Types of errors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Grammatical	98	27.81%
Punctuation	111	28.10%
Spelling	147	44.05%
Capitalization	12	3.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100%</b>

From table 4.1.7.4 it could be realized that the most frequently occurring errors had to do with spelling with a frequency of 147 (44.05%). Next to follow were punctuation errors which had a frequency of 111 (28.10%). With a percentage of 27.81% representing a frequency of 98, grammatical errors came third. The least identified errors were that of capitalization which had the least frequency of occurrence as 12(3.03%).

#### **4.1.7.5 Taxonomies**

Ellis (1997) suggests four steps in error analysis. The first is to identify the error. This is done by comparing what is written by the learner to the correct one in the target language. The next is to describe the error. Here the researcher indicates and specifies how the errors differ from the native speakers. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) propose two taxonomies in the description of errors. They are **Error Based on Linguistic Category Taxonomy**. This taxonomy classifies linguistic deviations according to language components such as syntax and morphology, semantic and lexicon, phonology and discourse style.

The second taxonomy is the **Error Based on Surface Strategy Taxonomy**. This emphasizes the way the learner deviates from the surface structure and this helps the learner to construct correct language.

Employing these taxonomies, the students' errors were classified into the following.

**Error of Omission:** order (1981) explains this as a situation where an element which is supposed to be present is omitted.

**Error of Addition:** This is where an element which is not supposed to be present is added.

**Error of Misformation:** This is where a learner uses a wrong item in the right place. Here an error of selection is made.

**Error of Ordering:** this is related to ordering or sequencing. Here the elements are correct but are sequenced wrongly.

Based on these the students' identified errors were described and corrected

**Table 4.1.7.5 Identified Errors**

<b>Grammatical errors</b>	<b>Description of errors</b>	<b>Correction of errors</b>
I stand on <b><u>behave</u></b> of all <b><u>prefect</u></b>	Confusion of homophones and error of omission	I stand on <b><u>behalf</u></b> of all prefect <u>s</u>
Most of <b><u>us</u></b> here do not know how to manage <b><u>their</u></b> time	Wrong use of pronoun with its antecedent	Most of <b><u>us</u></b> here do not know how to manage <b><u>our</u></b> time
After <b><u>a schedule have</u></b> been accomplished	Wrong subject verb agreement	After a schedule <b><u>has</u></b> been accomplished
<b><u>Some</u></b> student <u>s</u> come for some <b><u>lesson</u></b>	Neglecting the 'S' of plural	Some student <u>s</u> come for some lesson <u>s</u>
<b><u>This</u></b> classes	Using wrong	<b><u>These</u></b> classes

	demonstrative pronoun as a determiner	
<b>Punctuation errors</b>	<b>Description of error</b>	<b>Correction of error</b>
When there is no teacher in class^ instead of them going to the library^ they sit down and talk.	Omission of commas	When there is no teacher in class <sub>2</sub> instead of them going to the library <sub>2</sub> they sit down and talk.
Dont, wont, isnt, didnt	Omission of the apostrophe in contracted forms.	Don't, won't, can't, isn't, didn't
<b>Capitalization Errors</b>	<b>Description of error</b>	<b>Correction of error</b>
Swesbus	Writing acronyms in small letters	SWESBUS
Wassce		WASSCCE
i	Personal Pronoun I written in small letter	I
<u>s</u> wedru	Starting a proper noun with a small letter.	<u>S</u> wedru
<b>Spelling Errors</b>	<b>Description of error</b>	<b>Correction of error</b>
Now a days	misformation	Nowadays
Time table	misformation	Timetable
Other	Confusion of homophones	Order
A lot	misformation	a lot
Souls	Confusion of homophones	Sorts
Junior	Addition	junior
Gentle men	Misformation	Gentlemen
Assisstant	Addition	assistant
Achive	Omission	achieve
Tough/thaught	Confusion of homophones	taught
Exit/exite	Confusion of homophones	exeat
Went	Confusion of	want



	homophones	
Shear	Confusion of homophones	Share
Loose/loss	Confusion of homophones	Lose

Having identified the various errors and considering the frequency of occurrence as compared to the frequency of occurrence of social media language in the students' writings, the researcher probed further to find out the influence of social media language on students' writings which is the second research question to be answered.

#### **4.2 The influence of Social Media Language on Students' Written English**

Having established the prevalent use of social media language, the common assertion of social media influencing students' writings needed to be investigated. Participants were presented with statements to which they responded. This section discusses data on the influence of students' use of social media language on their academic writings. This is in response to the second research question.

##### **4.2.1 Social Media Language Affect Aspects of Students' Academic Writing**

Responses of participants were collected and analyzed to find out aspects of students' writings affected by social media language use. Participants were presented with four statements and the responses are hereby tabulated.

**Table 4.2.1 Social Media Language Affect Aspects of Students Academic****Writings**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>SD (1)</b>	<b>D(2)</b>	<b>U(3)</b>	<b>A(4)</b>	<b>SA(S)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Social media language motivates students to use the English language	10	4	0	10	25	3.73	0.62
Social media language affects the grammar of students	0	2	0	14	33	4.59	1.14
Social media language affects the spelling of the students	10	2	0	0	37	4.06	1.66
Social media language affects sentence construction	10	10	2	0	27	3.48	1.42

Almost all the participants strongly agreed to the first statement. This is in consideration of the mean score of 3.73 and an insignificant deviation of 0.62. This implies that majority shared the view that social media language motivated the participants to use the English language.

The mean of 4.59 was an indication that majority attested to the fact that social media language use affected students' grammar. A similar mean score of 4.06 also indicated that the language used on social media has affected their spelling. A significant number of the participants giving a mean of 3.48 indicated that it has affected their sentence construction. The implication is that all the participants in the study were aware of the effects of social media language on their writings.

This is in line with Asare - Donkor (2018) who posited that the creation of short codes to represent words negatively affected students' grammar and spelling thereby, affecting their performance in examinations.

#### 4.2.2 Influence of Social Media Language on Students Performance

This section sought to find out how social media language use positively or negatively impacted students' academic performance. Participants were presented with six statements and the responses are hereby presented as follows.

**Table 4.2.2: Influence of Social Media Language on Students Performance**

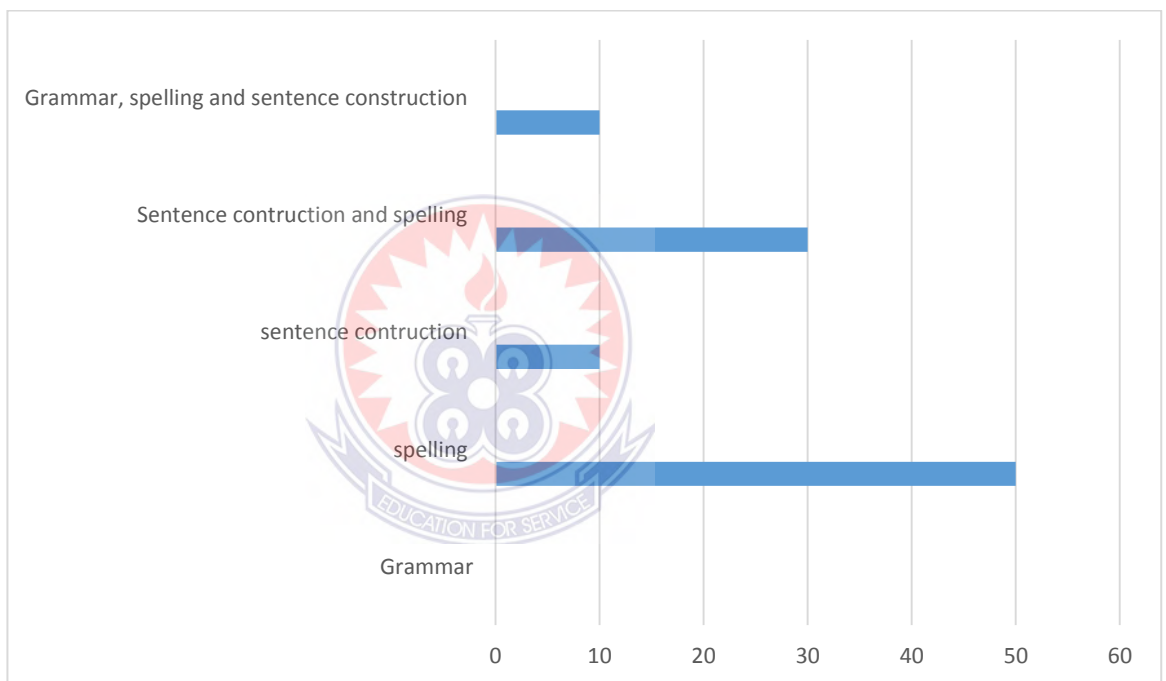
Statement	SD (1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(S)	Mean	Standard deviation
Social media language positively impacted students' academic performance.	20	8	0	6	15	2.75	1.82
Mistakes are corrected by participants on social media.	15	6	0	8	20	3.24	0.96
New words and expressions are found on social media.	11	2	0	15	21	3.67	1.59
Social media language negatively impacted students' performance	8	20	0	10	11	2.91	1.48
One loses marks for using social media language in class assignments.	0	3	0	10	36	4.61	0.78
Social media language makes meaning difficult.	0	5	0	12	32	4.44	0.96

The study, looking at the influence of the use of social media language on students' academic performance in English language, revealed a divided opinion considering a mean score of 2.75 and a standard deviation of 1.28. 20 participants and 8 participants strongly disagreed and disagreed that the use of social media language positively impacted their performance. This was in contrast with 15 and 6 participants who strongly agreed and agreed to the assertion that mistakes in their posts were corrected by their peers and this helped them to improve upon their performance. Others making a mean of 3.67 also indicated that they came across new words and expressions which they could not have gotten from textbooks. Irfan et al (2016) shared the same view that learners learn new words and phrases via social media. Not all, 8 and 20 participants shared opposing views in that the use of social media language negatively affected their performance. This is because; they lose marks when they use social media language in their compositions. This was arrived at in consideration of a mean score of 4.61. This implies that almost all the participants attested to the assertion. The use of social media language also made it difficult for readers of their essays to understand what is written. This was depicted by the mean score of 4.44. The implication is that almost all the participants strongly agreed to the statement that social media language makes meaning difficult and this affected their performance negatively. This view is supported by Asare - Donkor (2018) that the creation of short codes to represent words negatively affected students' grammar and spelling thereby affecting students' performance in examinations. Students' performance is affected in that David (2001), Cai (2001) and Dovey (2010) posit that writing is an important tool in education. It is therefore important that it is not littered with social media scripts as they usually pollute the grammar, spelling and sentence construction.

### 4.2.3 Teachers views on the Effects of SMS on Students' Writings

The views of teachers were sought as to the aspects of students' writings affected by social media language. They were presented with one question „which aspects of students' writings are affected by social media language?“. The options were grammar, spelling and sentence construction, sentence construction and spelling, sentence construction, spelling and grammar. The responses are presented in figure 4.2

**Figure 4.2.1: Teachers views on the Effects of SMS on Students' Writings**



3 forming 30% of the sample indicated that social media language affected sentence construction and spelling. 5 forming 50% indicated that it affected only spelling. 1 representing 10% indicated that it affected sentence construction and another 1 making another 10% indicated that it affected the grammar, spelling and sentence construction. These responses indicated that the use of social media language in writing affected students' writings in various aspects. This is supported

by Chang, (2012) which revealed that the use of phone abbreviations in texting has a negative impact on grammar as well as on learners' writings in general.

#### 4.2.4 Addiction to Social Media Language

Students' persistent use of social media language on the various platforms led the researcher to find out if they were addicted to the language used on social media. Participants were presented with three statements to which they responded as follows.

**Table 4.2.4 Addiction to Social Media Language**

Statement	SD(I)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard deviation
Students spend long hours on social media platforms chatting with friends	2	7	5	13	22	3.93	1.24
Students are addicted to the use of social media language in writing	30	7	0	2	10	2.08	1.61
Students unconsciously use short forms of words when writing English assignments	6	3	2	16	22	3.91	1.4

From table 4.2.4, a mean of 3.93 implies that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement that students spend long hours on social media chatting with friends. This is in line with Belal (2004) who was of the view that social media language use has addictive tendencies. As students spend long hours on social media, they get accustomed to the language used such that it becomes

difficult for them to move from the informal writing style to the academic style which is more formal.

Opinions were however divided as to students' addiction to social media language use in writing academic papers. The mean score here stood at 2.08 which implies that even though majority strongly disagreed with the assertion, there was quiet a significant number who were in support of the statement. As 30 and 7 participants strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statements 10 and 2 strongly agreed and agreed with the statement.

Again, almost all the participants strongly agreed that they unconsciously transported social media language into their assignments. This is supported by the mean score of 3.91 which is an indication of students' addiction to social media language use in formal writings.

With all these, the fact is established that students use social media language features when texting and according to Howatt (1984), by the persistent use of the defective social media language features, students naturally acquire a new language which they use unconsciously in writing.

### **4.3 Opinions of both Teachers and Students on the use of Social Media**

#### **Language in Academic Writings**

Having discussed the prevalence and effects of social media language use among students, the study needed to seek the opinion of stakeholders as to whether this new form of writing can be accepted in academic writing. This led to the third research question, "what is the opinion of teachers and students about the use of social media language in formal writings?"

### 4.3.1 Social Media Language as a Variety of English

In the era of technological advancement, social networking sites and their accompanying social media language are penetrating academic enclaves causing the creation of new words and new meanings of words. This section sought the opinion of participants as to how they perceived social media language. Responses to three statements presented are tabulated below.

**Table: 4.3.1 Social Media Language as a Variety of English (students' views)**

Statement	SD(I)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard deviation
Social media has brought in a new language	24	15	4	4	2	1.87	1.13
Social media language is changing the English language	0	20	3	26	0	3.18	0.7
Social media language is a variety of English language	20	16	4	6	3	2.1	1.23

Despite the prevalent use of social media language among the participants, majority of them disagreed with the statement that social media has brought in a new language. This was arrived at as the mean score stood at 1.87 with a standard deviation of 1.13. This implies that though the language is used predominant among the youth, they do not consider it an immerging language. However, the language was seen as causing a change in the English Language. The mean of 3.18 with just 0.8 standard deviation, indicated that majority of the participants agreed to the statements. This implies that participants were aware of the changes social media language is imposing on the English language.



Opinions were divided on the status of social media language as a variety of the English language. The mean of 2.1 indicated divided opinions. 26 of the participants agreed to the statement that social media language was a variety of English language.

The teachers were also presented with the same statements to which they responded as follows.

**Table: 4.3.1.2 Social Media Language as a Variety of English (teachers' views)**

Statement	SD(I)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard deviation
Social media has brought in a new language	0	2	0	2	6	4.2	1.16
Social media is changing the English language	0	0	2	6	2	4	0.4
Social media is variety of English language	6	4	0	0	0	1.4	0.48

From the table, it was realized that majority of the teacher participants strongly agreed that a new language is emerging as a result of social media. This is in contrast with the views of the students who did not see a new language emerge.

Also majority of the participants agreed that the emerging language, that is social media language, is causing a change in the English language. The majority however disagreed with the statement that social media language is a variety of English. This was revealed by the mean of 1.4. The implication is that the teachers and the students shared opposing views

#### **4.3.2: Acceptance of Social Media Language in Academic Writing**

The use of social media language in academic writing has generated controversy in academic fields. Three statements were presented to elicit responses from

participants on the acceptance of this language in students' academic writings. The responses are hereby presented.

**Table 4.3.2: Acceptance of Social Media Language in Academic Writing**

Statement	SD(1)	D(2)	U(3)	A(4)	SA(5)	Mean	Standard deviation
Social media language makes writing easy for students'	15	10	1	11	12	2.89	1.63
Social media language is the new trend	9	5	0	15	20	3.65	1.72
Social media language makes students lazy	10	3	1	20	15	3.55	1.48
Social media language should be accepted in academic writing	20	16	0	10	3	2.18	1.12
Social media language should not be accepted	20	11	3	5	10	2.46	1.59

From Table 4.3.2 the responses revealed a divided opinion about the concerns that social media language made writing easy for students'. This was revealed by a mean of 2.89. This implies that almost an equal number of participants shared opposing views. As 15 and 10 participants strongly agreed and agreed that social media language made writing easy for students' 11 and 12 strongly agreed and agreed to the assertion.

On social media language being a new trend, majority of the participants (3.65) mean agreed to the statement. However, one criticism that was responded to by the majority agreeing to the statements was that it will make students lazy. The mean to ascertain this response was 3.55. A divided opinion was however reached on the

acceptance of social media language in academic writing. The mean score here was 2.18 with a standard deviation of 1.12.

Craig. (2003) argues that textism is not actually wrong because language naturally evolves and that the new creations may eventually become part of the Standard English lexicon. Despite this assertion, acceptance of social media language in academic writing was not a popular opinion among the participants.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

**Prevalence:** with a mean of 4.30, it was eminent that social media language use is prevalent among senior high school students. All the participants admitted having accounts on various social media platforms where they sent and received text messages. This exposes the participants to the pseudo language used on the various platforms.

The preferred mode of communication was texting which was done in the dominant language, English. This was proven by the mean of 4.57 and 4.87 respectively. However, it came up that the English language used on those platforms is dented with unconventional features such as shortening of words, abbreviations, number to letter homophones and emoticons which make the language substandard.

Also, it came up strongly that participants sent and received text messages frequently as shown by the mean of 4.59. Going by Nation (1990), the frequency of usage and the number of encounters in different forms of context determines the acquisition of new vocabulary. By the frequent use of this social media language, participants were expected to transport the new language into their academic writings. The findings of the study however revealed the contrary. In as much as participants admitted using the language in writing as shown by the mean value of

4.34, however, they did so in their notes but not in their assignments and examinations. This was proven through the document analysis of students' scripts which showed that shortening of words had a frequency of 5 (0.025%) and clippings also had a frequency of 4 (0.02%). This is an indication that though social media language use is prevalent among the youth; it has not transcended into their academic writings.

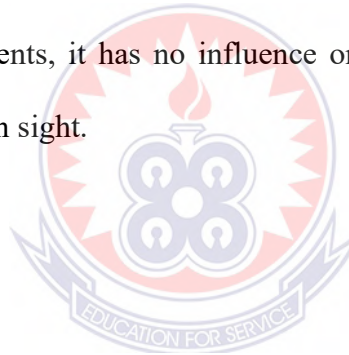
The participants demonstrated awareness of the consequences should they write this language in academic situations. This shows that even though the use of social media language is prevalent among the students, its use remained at the social media level but not in the classroom.

**Influence:** it came out that students committed errors with grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence constructions. Some sources of the errors were confusion of homophones, error of omission and misformation. Students wrote words such as **behave** in place of **behalf** resulting in ungrammatical contractions such as **I stand on behave of all prefect** instead of **I stand on behalf of all prefects, in other to make...instead of in order to make...etc.** They also omitted letters which sometimes resulted in other words as a result of which the meaning of what they intended to write is altered. For example, students wrote **Active** instead of **Achieve**, **Shear** instead of **share** and **loose/loss** instead of **lose** etc. They also amalgamated separate words and separated single words. For example, **now a days** was written for **Nowadays**, **Time table** for **Timetable** etc. They however did not use shortenings, number to letter homophones, emoticons and other social media characters. Considering the percentage of occurrence of social media language (0.045%) in students' writings, it can be deduced that social media language is not responsible for the numerous errors students make in writing.

**Opinions:** on the acceptance of social media language in academic writings, opinions were divided considering the mean of 2.18 and 2.46. Some of the participants shared the opinion that social media language should be accepted as a new trend in the language classroom because it will help students to write fast and be free from grammatical rules. This will give them freedom from the restrictive rules guiding the use of the English language thereby building their confidence.

Others of a mean value of 2.46 were against the acceptance of this language which in line with the findings of Ghana Academic Affairs Department of Wa Polytechnic Registry (2006) that its acceptance was going to create reading problems and delay the marking of script. Also it was going to make the students lazy.

From the above, it can be argued that though the use of social media language is prevalent among students, it has no influence on their academic writings and its acceptance is not yet in sight.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introductions

The study investigated the influence of social media language on the academic writings of students of Senior High school. Swedru School of Business was used as a case study. The objective of the study was to find out how prevalent social media language is among the students of Swedru School of Business. It was also to find out the influence of social media language on students' writings. Again, it was to seek the opinion of both teachers and students on the use of this language in academic writings. This concluding chapter focuses on the summary of the findings Based on the Data Obtained, Draw Conclusions and Make Recommendations.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings of the research;

- Students of Swedru School of Business are highly exposed to social media and its language use thereof.
- The use of social media language has not transcended into students' academic writings
- Students are able to differentiate between formal and informal writings. They therefore use social media language in their notes but not in class assignments and in examinations.
- Students committed errors of omission, confusion of homophones, poor subject-verb agreement, wrong use of pronouns with their antecedents and other errors but these errors did not reflect the influence of social media language.

- Permitting social media language in academic writing, has not yet received favourable consideration among students and teachers.

## 5.2 Recommendations

With technological advancement, the English language is transforming. The standard form and grammatical rules of the language have been deteriorating. As a result of social media language use, punctuation marks are often neglected, elliptic sentences are written and the use of emoticons, short forms of words, and abbreviations have been popularized. Based on this premise, the following recommendations are made.

- Students' attention should be drawn as to the impact social media language use has on their academic writings. They should be encouraged to write correct sentences on social media where applicable. This will ensure students mastery of the formal English language writing in essays as learners need to be proficient in formal writing for academic purposes and for their future career.
- Teachers are hereby encouraged to use varieties of activities and offer constant academic writing opportunities to the students to minimize the identified errors. Teachers should develop materials that will address the identified difficulties of senior high school students in writing essays.
- Among the errors identified was one unique error that needs to be addressed. It is the omission of the plural indicator „s“ in the plural form of the words „students“ and „parents“. All the 49 student participants but one omitted the plural indicator in those two words. Teachers are hereby called upon to make deliberate efforts to correct this error among students.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In view of the data presented, the following conclusions were reached regarding the prevalent use of social media language in students' academic writings, the influence of social media language on students' writings and the opinions of both students and teachers in permitting this form of writing in academic essays.

The use of social media language is prevalent among secondary school students on social media but this has not transcended into their academic writings.

Students are not addicted to the use of social media language in that they are able to differentiate between formal writings and informal writings such that they use the formal English in writing class exercises and in examinations.

With technological advancement, the use of social media language is having a serious toll on the English language. Many hereby believe that a new language has emerged and teachers must watch out for students' use of this language in their writings as students occasionally write them unconsciously.

The use of this language in academic writing is highly opposed as it will create difficulty in understanding students' writings and lower the standards of writing the English language. Social media language therefore has no place in academic writings.



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**APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX A**

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the impact of social media language on the academic writings of Senior High School students. Please, support this research by answering the following questions. The information provided will be treated as confidential.

Thank you.

**Instructions**

Choose the correct answer from the multiple choice in the brackets.

Other guidelines are indicated as per requirement of the question.

Section A: Bio data

Please Tick [] the appropriate boxes

1. Gender

a) Male []

b) Female []

2) Age

a) 20 – 25 []

b) 26 – 30 []

c) 31 – 35 []

d) Others (specify)

.....

3) Educational level

a) Masters []

b) 1<sup>st</sup> Degree []

c) Diploma []



d) Others

(specify).....

4) Teaching Experience

a) 1 – 5 years [ ]

b) 6 – 10 years [ ]

c) 11 – 15 years [ ]

d) 16 – 20 years [ ]

e) 21 years and above [ ]



**SECTION B**

Tick [√] the appropriate column

	<b>Strongly Disagree (SD)</b>	<b>Disagree (D)</b>	<b>Undecided (U)</b>	<b>Agree (A)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (SA)</b>
I have noticed an increase in the use of text language in students' assignments.					
I often see social media language features in students' writings.					
Students are able to distinguish between formal and informal writings.					
Social media has brought in a new language					
Social media is changing the English language					
Social media is variety of English language					

Which aspects of students' writings are affected by social media language?

- Grammar, spelling and sentence construction
- Sentence construction and spelling
- Sentence construction
- Spelling
- Grammar.

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION – WINNEBA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

**Dear Students,**

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the impact of social media language on the academic writings of Senior High School students. Please, support this research by answering the following questions. The information provided will be treated as confidential.

Thank you.

Instructions: Choose the correct answer from the multiple choices in the brackets.

Other guidelines are indicated as per requirement of the question.

**Part A:**

Please Tick [] the appropriate boxes

1) Gender

a) Male []

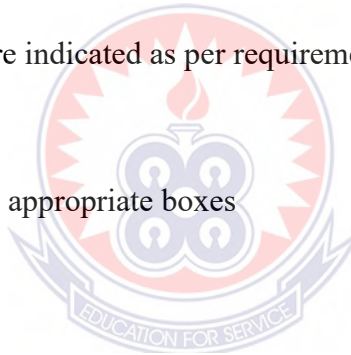
b) Female []

2) Age

a) 12 – 15 []

b) 16 – 18 []

c) 19 and above []



**PART B**

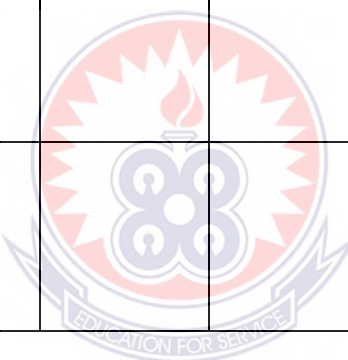
Tick [√] the appropriate column

	<b>Strongly Disagree (SD)</b>	<b>Disagree (D)</b>	<b>Undecided (U)</b>	<b>Agree (A)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (SA)</b>
I have accounts with more than one social media platform					
I have been on the platforms for more than six months					
I often chat with friends on social media					
I seek information on social media for my assignments					
I prefer to communicate on social media by texting					
I prefer to communicate on social media by speaking					
I prefer to communicate on social media by speaking and texting.					
I send and receive text messages frequently on social media					
I rarely send or receive text messages on social media					
I occasionally send or receive text messages on					

social media					
I prefer to communicate on social media in English					
I use abbreviations, short forms of words, emoticons and other forms of SMS when texting					
I use the standard English when texting					
Using textism, makes me type with speed.					
Social media language motivates students to use the English language					
Social media language affects the grammar of students					
Social media language affects the spelling of the students					
Social media language affects sentence construction					
Social media language positively impacted students' academic performance.					
Mistakes are corrected					

by participants on social media.					
New words and expressions are found on social media.					
Social media language negatively impacted students' performance					
One loses marks for using social media language in class assignments.					
Social media language makes meaning difficult.					
Students spend long hours on social media platforms chatting with friends					
Students are addicted to the use of social media language in writing					
Students unconsciously use short forms of words when writing English assignments					
Social media has brought in a new language					
Social media language is changing the English					

language					
Social media language is a variety of English language					
Social media language makes writing easy for students“					
Social media language is the new trend					
Social media language makes students lazy					
Social media language should be accepted in academic writing					
Social media language should not be accepted in academic writing					



## APPENDIX B

## STUDENTS COMPOSITIONS

14 years  
3 Arts 3A. #

As a Senior Prefect of your school, write the speech you would deliver to first-year students on how to manage their time.

Answer

THE SPEECH DELIVER TO FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS AND HOW TO MANAGE THEIR TIME.

Mr. Chairman, Panel of Judges, Headmaster, Teachers, Fellow Students, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am the person of Ekuu Danguah, and the Senior Girls Prefects on Swedru School of Business. Mr. Chairman may I get some few minutes to explain some keywords on it. <sup>in Oxford dictionary</sup> When we talk about manage, it means how to handle control or how to direct or carry on hardworking. <sup>intrinsic</sup> Time is a period during the something <sup>exist</sup> exists or continues or can something happen.

Mr. Chairman, the student first thing <sup>cap</sup> I will say is that, the student should <sup>know</sup> how to use their time on ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~one's~~ <sup>one's</sup> experience during a particular period. The students should know a particular period or particular time ~~time~~ that they should be in a particular period otherwise they would be ~~loss~~ <sup>lose</sup> some of the lessons that maybe the teacher will teach. And <sup>manage</sup> how to use that particular period. If she <sup>manage</sup> manage her time well, ~~she~~ she will be able to <sup>in prep</sup> achieve a goal on her final year.

Mr. Chairman, ~~the my~~ the other point <sup>cap</sup> I will say is that, <sup>cap</sup> I want to talk about how time <sup>cap</sup> timing determine ~~or~~ time and time keeper. The students should <sup>know</sup> how to be a time keeper in school. Students should be <sup>cap</sup> punctually in school and come to school on time. If it is classes hours, they should take it seriously and even if there is no teacher, <sup>cap</sup> they should concentrate on what ~~their~~ <sup>cap</sup> friend will teach them <sup>seriously</sup>. This will help them to managed their time good.

Mr. Chairman, the point <sup>cap</sup> I will also make is how students ~~should~~ <sup>should</sup> ~~not~~ be punctual <sup>cap</sup> come to school on time, ~~not~~ <sup>cap</sup> be late. Students pretend to be not coming to school on time, ~~every~~ <sup>cap</sup> every day they will make ~~the~~ <sup>cap</sup> comment ~~that~~ they are late. <sup>cap</sup> they will pretend to be sick that day and

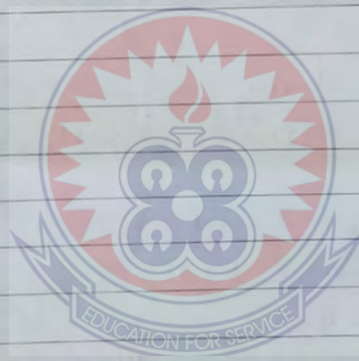


not go to class on time.

Mr. Chairman, another point <sup>say</sup> it will make is how students attend classes hours and how to manage their time. Students should attend class and learn hard when it is class hours. Students will not attend classes hours and they will add move around the campus and make unnecessary things that will not help them to manage their time well. They should be punctual in school and in class.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for listening to my few advice and it <sup>say</sup> will let to make them to be punctual in school and not playing <sup>with</sup> around. Thank you.

C - 5  
O - 5  
E - 9  
MA - 0



19  
50

Age: 19  
Sex: female

3 Arts 4

20th March, 2020

Q. As a Senior prefect of your school write speech you would deliver to first year students on how to manage their time.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY BY FELICITY ARTHUR, ON 20TH MARCH AT THE SKEDRU SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ASSEMBLY HALL ON THE TOPIC "HOW THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS CAN MANAGE THEIR TIME"

Mr. Chairman, Head <sup>supervisor</sup>master, Teaching and Non-teaching <sup>om</sup>Staff, Fellow <sup>replaces</sup>Students, Ladies and <sup>sm let</sup>Gentlemen: I ~~deem~~ deem it a great <sup>cap</sup>Opportunity to stand here to deliver a speech on the above <sup>or</sup>mentioned topic to my fellow <sup>om</sup>student, that is our first year <sup>om</sup>students who are now in the school to <sup>add</sup>acquired new knowledge and <sup>add</sup>Skill to be <sup>add</sup>able to become <sup>an article</sup>an important people in the Society.

Firstly, Mr. Chairman, <sup>sm</sup>preparation of <sup>separation</sup>time table for every student to be able to manage his or her <sup>time pm</sup>in the or she should prepare his or her personal <sup>sm</sup>time table containing the activities that the person will be doing during the day. This will <sup>aid</sup>aid the person in whatever he or she will do. <sup>om</sup>For They should prepare time table for what they are to study <sup>om</sup>especially in the evening because, in the morning, we all come to school to continue our daily activities. And <sup>om</sup>even in the school, <sup>add</sup>too he or she can do that by <sup>or word</sup>doing something <sup>the</sup>that will benefit him or her when there <sup>is</sup>is no teacher or the little time the he or she will get. The <sup>separation</sup>time table will <sup>aid</sup>show or <sup>aid</sup>aid them <sup>om</sup>what they are to learn on the days like <sup>sm letter</sup>Monday one can learn one elective one core subject like Mathematics and French as to keep him or her busy all <sup>big</sup>day. Also ~~they can~~ <sup>om</sup>In doing this, it will prevent him or her from following friends to do <sup>unnessary</sup>unnessary <sup>things</sup>things. After school, one can <sup>social media language</sup>sleep small <sup>om</sup>to relax the mind because you just close <sup>om</sup>from school and continue your activities when you wake up.



3 Arts 3B

20th March, 2020.

Female. 18 years

As the series prefect of your school, write a speech you would deliver to first year students on how to manage their time.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY MISS JACQUELINE NIYAMAH,  
ON THE 20TH OF MARCH, 2020 ON THE TOPIC  
TIME MANAGEMENT.

I am glad to be given this opportunity to read my speech to you hearing on the topic 'Time Management'. I would firstly like to welcome you all to our noble institution.

The topic before us today is 'Time Management' and I would like to explain the term. Time management, as we all know is the ~~action~~ when we use our time wisely or effectively and not misusing it.

In this noble institution of ours, time is something that we do not joke with. My speech is to tell you how to use your time wisely and effectively. I know that most of you don't see the essence of this speech but it is through this speech that our school, (Sweden School of Business), is where it is now. We manage our time well, so we always get the best. Using your time effectively and wisely will help you to acquire more.

~~The first thing~~ I would like to talk about is time consciousness. This means being alert with your time. Students who practice this gets it easily <sup>because</sup> they do the right things at the right <sup>time</sup>. A student who is time conscious makes plans. I would like to urge you all to make good use of your time. Plan ahead, make timetables and also study your books. These will help you in life. Students who do not manage their time well always end up failing in their exams. This is because they didn't plan ahead. I have had a lot of experiences in this school <sup>with</sup> our <sup>seniors</sup> who were before us. Some used their time wisely and effectively but others misused their time. At the end of their three years stay in the school, the results of their final exams were out and we ~~were~~ <sup>was</sup> not surprised to see that those <sup>whom</sup> ~~who~~ manage their time effectively and wisely, passed the examination with good grades, whereas those who misused their time, ~~even~~ <sup>failed</sup> and couldn't even come to the school for their certificates.

Do not follow friends. You should know that your friends can make you and unmake you. People who follow their friends who are bad do not end ~~up~~ well. Students engage their friends into unnecessary conversations and end up getting nothing. Please, my advice is that avoid friends who engage you in unnecessary activities like gossiping and make good friends who will help you to learn so that you can pass your examination successfully. As far as ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> concerned, there would be a lot of ~~big~~ <sup>big</sup> challenges that you will encounter but I want to tell you to stand firm. You will be bullied and at times, insulted for you wanting to do the right thing.

Another thing that I would like to talk about is to observe the rules of the school. Example is heed to the ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> sinner. This will help you to know the things you are to do at the exact time. We observe sinner and this helps us a lot. After school work, each and everyone of us is tired so we need to rest. My advice for you is that observe the sinner hours because it will help you to relax and rest so that you would be refreshed for evening prep periods. When it is time for you to sleep, sleep, for your body to be refreshed and also don't study harder but study smart.



C - 7  
 O - 7  
 E - 14  
 MA - 4

32  
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